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**COCHIN**  
**ON**  
**THE MASS.**

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# INSTRUCTIONS

ON THE

## PRAYERS & CEREMONIES

OF THE

### *Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.*

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. COCHIN,

AND ARRANGED FOR EACH SUNDAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

By W. Jos. WALTER,

LATE OF ST. EDMUND'S COLLEGE, AND TRANSLATOR OF THE  
MARTYRS OF CHATEAUBRIAND.

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# INSTRUCTIONS

ON THE

PRAYERS, &c.

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ON THE CANON OF THE MASS.

In every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean offering : for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.—Malach. cap. i. 11.

**Y**es, as the name of the Lord is great, therefore should this oblation be pure; those who offer it, irreproachable; those who participate thereof, exempt from all attachment to sin; and the manner of offering it, uniform and becoming. As the name of the Lord is dreadful, according to the expression of the same prophet, in a subsequent verse—that is, capable of exciting a holy awe, it must require, in those who honour it, dispositions of sincere humility, of holy fear, unfeigned respect, and profound recollection. As the name of the Lord is holy, those who desire to honour it worthily, should accompany the homage which they render exteriorly, with sentiments of adoration and love, of obedience



and self-denial. To inspire these salutary dispositions, is the object of the church in that part of the Mass which it is our present purpose to explain; and as this portion of the solemn rites comprises whatever is most awful and momentous in the oblation, let us, my brethren, excite all our attention to meditate attentively on a subject of so much interest.

This series of prayers is termed the *Canon*; it commences immediately after the Preface, includes the Consecration, and terminates at the Lord's Prayer: the word Canon signifies a rule, or ordinance of prayer.

The church employs this word to express such things as should be invariable in their form: thus she denominates the precepts laid down in her councils, the holy canons, and terms that canonical which is conformable to these precepts; thus she has given the name of Canonries to such places as subject certain of her ministers to observe the same rule in the hours of divine office. The name of Canon, therefore, is most appropriate to this part of the Mass; because, wherever the church extends her authority, every minister is subjected to the same essential order of prayer, without being at liberty either to add to or retrench any thing from, the formulas and ceremonies prescribed.

I say essential order, for I must allow, that if this uniformity were rigorously examined, some variations would be found between the churches of the East and the West; but in ascending to the remotest ages, we should find, that such variations

affect not the essence of these prayers ; that at all times the universal church has offered to God the same supplications ; that she has observed the same rites and ceremonies ; and has censured such of her ministers as, affecting singularity, have presumed to add any other prayers that their devotion happened to suggest. Some theologians have thought, that the prayers of the Canon, as well as the words of consecration, equally appertain to the essence of the sacrifice ; and, although this opinion be not universally followed, it ought to inspire the ministers who celebrate this august sacrifice, with the most scrupulous attention, not to deviate from the order prescribed in the canon of the Mass.

The name of Canon has not always been given to the prayers that precede and follow the consecration : in the first ages it was merely called *The Prayer*, by way of distinction, as containing all the characteristics of this holy exercise. The object of prayer is to honour God, and to draw down upon the suppliant the grace and succour he solicits. Jesus Christ, through whom the oblation is offered, fulfils this twofold object of prayer ; he renders homage to the majesty of his eternal Father, and draws down upon human nature the benign regard of his mercy.

In after-times, it was termed the Canonical Prayer, to distinguish it from the other formulas, the choice and appointment of which the church left to the discretion of her pastors : in fine, this prayer has retained the name of Canon.

With such veneration were these prayers regarded in the first ages of the church, that some authors made no scruple to rank them in the number of inspired writings; persuaded that the Holy Spirit had, in a special manner, directed the church in the choice and disposition of the objects which she here demands of God through Jesus Christ. They have also been denominated the *Action*, because they comprehend the principal action of the sacrifice: that is, the change of the bread into the body, and of the wine into the blood, of Christ. But all these varied expressions tend only to establish the same truths; and, therefore, whether it be called the canon, the prayer, the canonical prayer, &c. it always has been, and ever will be understood, to signify the most excellent of all prayers, and that indeed which imparts a value to all the rest, inasmuch as it is of all others the most intimately connected with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

As this is the most excellent, it is also the most ancient of all the forms of prayer. Before the age of St Gregory; Pope Vigilius testified that it had been received from apostolical tradition: this, at least, is certain, that it is impossible to point out any period in the annals of the church, in which the holy sacrifice was offered under any other form of prayers. What veneration ought we not to feel at hearing these words, which our forefathers have so often and so devoutly pronounced!—at hearing these prayers, that formed their sole consolation, and which, during the horrors of persecution, were

so effectual in drawing down upon them that courage and constancy which were necessary to enable them to resist the rage of tyrants, undergo the extremity of torture, and shed their blood in defence of the gospel!

My brethren, we may estimate the weakness of our faith, by the little impression made on our hearts by these awful words: many affect a disgust at their uniformity, and yet this very uniformity is what principally entitles them to our veneration. Some Christians there are, so fastidious with respect to the things of God, that, forsooth, it is found necessary to stimulate their devotion, and arouse their languid faith, by new-modelled prayers and new-fangled expressions, perfectly foreign to those which the spirit of religion dictated to our fathers: Let us become more spiritual-minded; we shall then find, that by simply following the canon of the Mass, word for word, we shall fully penetrate into its sense and spirit. If we availed ourselves of the liberty so kindly granted by the church, of following the priest in his recital of the different prayers of the Mass, we should feel animated with all the dispositions they are so well calculated to excite; and if, for essential reasons, we allow ourselves the use of other prayers,—ever remembering that they must be such as are authorized by the church,—still we should endeavour to cherish such sentiments as may ensure us the fruit of those offered by the priest in our name.

It should not escape our notice, that, during the

whole time of the canon, the priest holds his hands in an elevated posture; this is expressive of the elevation of his and our hearts to heaven, and should serve to remind us, that we must make the most vigorous efforts to resist that spirit of dissipation which is so inimical to fervour and application. If the least voluntary distraction in prayer necessarily destroys its effect, we must surely regard all wilful dissipation of mind at the moment of the sacrifice, as a heinous sacrilege. It is therefore of importance, frequently to study the prayers that compose the canon of the Mass, that we may be feelingly impressed with the sentiments they breathe.

The first Christians felt not the necessity of this study: solidly instructed in the truths of salvation, which constituted their chief delight, they carried in their bosoms such a fund of recollection, as rendered them attentive to every thing connected with our august mysteries. What, on the contrary, do we bring to the altar, but a spirit of languor and indifference? how often have we assisted at this awful action, without feeling the least emotion of fervency and love? It is to remedy these evils that I invite you to meditate on the sense, and enter into the spirit, of these prayers and ceremonies. It is of the utmost importance to study the necessary dispositions which this part of the Mass requires; and every Christian who wishes to assist thereat, in a devout and profitable manner, ought, in reciting these prayers, to consider himself under three points of view;—as a sinner, a priest, and a

victim. Jesus Christ here exercises, in some degree, this threefold function ; he exercises it in our behalf, and enjoins it as a duty on our part to imitate his example.

We approach the altar as sinners :—for, though Jesus Christ devoted himself in this sacrifice as a public anathema, as a universal reparation for sin, yet by us alone was its stain contracted. If, therefore, mercy and indulgence are implored, if the grace and compassion of the Almighty are solicited, it is in our behalf alone that these prayers are offered. Impressed with this conviction, dare we approach this holy action in a spirit of insensibility to the ills of our soul, but, above all, with a heart still attached to sin? Confusion and grief, groans and tears, accompanied with resolutions of amendment, are actions most conformable to the object of the prayers that compose the Canon.

We approach the altar as priests, by means of our union with Jesus Christ, who here fulfils the functions of his priesthood. With him we should co-operate in the sacrifice, and co-operate effectually ; not merely by the attention of our mind, but more especially by the disposition of our will, which should act in conformity to his, and be animated with his fervour. The prophet informs us, that the Saviour was offered because he so willed it, in order to show us that the merit of his oblation consisted in its being voluntary, and that, in executing the designs of his Eternal Father, he did, in fact, but fulfil his own. Now, the only way worthily to

discharge the functions of the priestly character which we participate with Jesus Christ, is to bring to this adorable action a will prepared, after his example, effectually to renounce whatever is forbidden by his law, to bend with submission to all the decrees of his Providence, and to accept with humility all the sacrifices that his unerring wisdom enjoins.

Nor must we forget to unite the quality of victim to that of priest, since our holy religion regards the one as a necessary consequence of the other. On the cross, Jesus Christ united these two opposite functions. He is about to renew them both upon the altar, and by inviting us to a participation of these august mysteries, he at the same time enjoins the precept, and sets the example of this self-immolation. The just and elect assembled at this awful sacrifice, may be properly regarded as a flock of victims, which has at its head the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world; and the church may say with truth, that her Spouse is to her a spouse of blood.

It is here that Jesus Christ most effectually preaches the destruction of sin; the separation of the flesh and the spirit, according to the expression of the apostle; the renunciation of our own will, of every dangerous inclination, of every feeling that is too far human.

The importance of these truths will become more evident, in proportion as we advance in our explanation of the prayers that compose the holy Canon.

The result of a due attention to this part of the Mass, will be an increase of fervour, veneration, and holy confidence; our faith will become more enlightened, our charity more ardent, and our hope more secure, both for time and eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE PRAYER 'TE IGITUR.'

Then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations, and whole burnt-offerings. PSAL. l. v. 21.

**T**HESE words could never apply either to the sacrifices of the old law, or to the prayers and ceremonies that accompanied them. The Almighty had expressed himself in too clear a manner to leave the royal prophet any ground to suppose that there ever would be a time when carnal victims could be pleasing to a Being who is spirit and truth, or impure blood prove acceptable to him who is sanctity, in its very essence: and had David, in the days of his penitence and tears, carried his views no farther than the burnt-offerings that surrounded him, he would have found them sufficient to stifle in his bosom all hopes of mercy and forgiveness. The spirit that dictated these words for his and for our consolation, transported him to those days of grace and salvation when Jesus Christ was to substitute a new form of worship in place of the ancient ceremonies: when, instead of victims that were an abomination to the Lord, the blood of the true and



living victim should flow upon our altars. Such is the sacrifice of justice which he foresaw in spirit; such is that acceptable oblation in which he beheld every other species of oblation united; such is that perfect holocaust whose merit should never be rejected. He knew that this sacrifice was to correspond in all respects both to the enormity of the offence to be expiated, and to the majesty of the God who was offended; that a parade of vain ceremonies and ineffectual prayers was no longer to accompany the sacrifice, but that every thing, even to the forms of expression employed by the church, should fully correspond to its dignity. He knew all this: but do we know it—we who daily assist at this adorable sacrifice, and partake of its blessings? And even if convinced of these truths, do we approach the altar in a spirit of unwearied attention and profound recollection? Let us enter upon a consideration of the prayers that immediately precede the oblation, and then have the candour to acknowledge either our ignorance of the meaning of these prayers, or our want of fervour in reciting them.

My brethren, so well calculated are these different prayers, both to enlighten our faith and nourish our piety, that I think it advisable to make them the subjects of separate Instructions, that by meditating on them singly, we may be the better enabled to estimate the value they possess in the eyes of God, to merit us the graces of which we stand in need.

The canon commences with a prayer for the church, and for those by whom it is guided and protected. It begins as follows; ‘ We, therefore, pray and beseech thee, O most merciful Father, &c.’ The word *therefore* is a proof of its being merely a continuation of the Preface, in which canticle homage was thus rendered to the Father; ‘ It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always, and in all places, give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, almighty Father, &c.’ The connection between the two prayers is evident from what follows: ‘ We, therefore, pray and beseech thee, O most merciful Father, &c.’ We beseech thee through Jesus Christ thy Son, for it is through him that our prayers are addressed to thee, and only by virtue of his sacrifice that we are authorized to offer them. It is only in a disposition of profound humility that we presume to offer them, assured that to be in any degree worthy of thy divine Majesty, they must proceed from a heart penetrated with its own nothingness: ‘ We, therefore, humbly beseech thee, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to accept and bless these gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices.’ These different expressions of gifts, presents and sacrifices, are not to be considered as a simple repetition of the same demand. Regarded under these points of view, the oblation will be found to offer three distinct truths to our consideration. We offer *gifts* to the Almighty, by presenting him with the substance of bread to be changed into the body of

Christ, and the substance of wine to be changed into his blood. But we must not forget, that these very offerings have been received at his hands : the first sentiment, therefore, that we should naturally feel is that of gratitude ; since this bread, which by its nature is of all nourishment the most useful, and that which most contributes to the support of life, is about to become, by its change into the body of Christ, the most salutary and the most hallowed of substances. Thus, my brethren, we present the Almighty with what was previously his gift, and we entreat him graciously to accept what he himself has placed in our hands, in order to afford us an opportunity of making an offering to his divine Majesty.

But these same gifts, by the choice and acceptance which the divine goodness makes of them, become so many *presents* offered by ourselves. Without resigning the sovereign dominion which he possesses over all creatures, still the Almighty has so far allowed us to appropriate to ourselves the good things of his bounty, that we can truly say we offer him something of our own, provided these presents come from a pure heart, from a soul that is innocent, or at least desires to be so, and provided the will acquiesces freely in the gift which the hand bestows. It is then that the God of all riches renders our offering conducive to our future glory. His sovereign dominion is acknowledged by the voluntary surrender we make of what he himself has lent us ; but what imparts all its merit

and value, is the sacrifice that accompanies it. It is a true holocaust, by the entire consummation of the victim; a pacific host, as being offered by a God who is infinite purity and sanctity; a victim of sin, as being invested with the form of sinners; a host of thanksgiving, as it renders to God an equivalent for what we have received; under all these varied characters it fulfils the whole extent of man's obligations: to a God of justice it becomes a sacrifice of propitiation; to a God of holiness it becomes a sacrifice pure and unspotted. By it, we claim a right to demand the full relief of all our necessities, for they are all expressed, they are all anticipated in the prayer with which the Canon commences.

We demand in the first place that the fruit of this sacrifice may be applied to the holy Catholic church. She alone possesses the right to participate therein, and to impart a share of its blessing to those who are attached to her unity. She is the church of God; she is his household; she is the spouse by whom he has formed the children of adoption. She is a holy church; very different from those unhallowed assemblies,—those adulterous sects, that presume to claim the title of spouse while they are so justly under a sentence of divorce. She is the Catholic church: which alone can be truly said to partake in some measure of the immensity of God. It is for her that the sacrifice is offered, that it may please the Almighty to grant her peace, by restraining the powers of hell from prevailing

against her, by keeping her under his protection, by enlightening her with his wisdom, and animating her by his charity : it is he who preserves her in unity, by inspiring her pastors with a spirit of vigilance and their people with sentiments of docility and subordination : it is he who governs her throughout the whole world, by presiding at the Instructions of her ministers, and by bringing back to the paths of justice and truth, all those whose errors might be injurious to her doctrine, or whose morals might be prejudicial to her sanctity. And, as to produce these effects, she stands in need of a visible head, partaking of the sanctity of him who is invisible, we pray for the pastor who fills the chair as vicar of Jesus Christ, that his watchful care may extend to all the portions of his numerous flock ; that he may be in the midst of the church of which he is the centre of unity, as a vigilant centinel to give the alarm when the wolf is seen stealing into the fold. So comprehensive is this prayer, that it embraces the interests of the whole Christian world ; but as the Pope is not the only pastor, and as each part of the mystical body has its particular guides and centinels, we pray for the bishop to whose care Providence has in a more particular manner entrusted us. The faith of this church will ever remain pure, as long as God is pleased to bless it with pastors animated with his spirit ; but, in order to ensure it the blessings of peace, there is also need of princes after God's own heart. Hence it is we name the prince under

whose government we live. Protected by those whom God has given her for her rulers, the church also requires the support of her members. No one is forgotten in her prayers. All those whose faith is orthodox—that is, conformable to the doctrine of the universal church; all those who profess the Catholic and apostolic faith, claim a share in the general supplication, and are entitled to the benefits of the sacrifice.

This prayer, with which the Canon of the Mass commences, is accompanied with such ceremonies and observances, as are well adapted to inspire sentiments of devotion. The priest begins by elevating his hands—a posture most proper to express the fervency of desire. His eyes are directed towards heaven, because he is convinced that succour can be derived only from on high. He joins his hands after they are elevated, which is the attitude of a criminal soliciting for pardon. His body is respectfully inclined, a posture externally expressive of the humility and self-abasement with which his heart should be penetrated. He three times repeats the sign of our redemption upon the matter of the sacrifice he is about to offer, because they cannot be justly termed true gifts, genuine presents, or effectual sacrifices, till the virtue of the cross has been communicated to them. He makes an obeisance at the name of the visible head of the church, the pastor of his diocese, or the prince under whose government he lives, because he regards them as the images of Jesus Christ, whose name

should never be pronounced but with respect. Now, if these external ceremonies be considered by the priest as so fully expressive of the dispositions this prayer should inspire, they ought surely to afford abundant motives to excite the assistants to sentiments of the most lively confidence, the most profound veneration for the divine Majesty, and the most unfeigned respect for whatever represents the authority of God.

Let us enter feelingly into these dispositions; the following prayers will suggest others, which, far from superceding, will serve only to confirm the present. If we do but enter seriously into the different views and feelings which the following prayers are so happily calculated to inspire, we shall find this holy sacrifice, which in its very nature is productive of the most blessed effects, more than commonly beneficial in our regard: it will prove the seal of our reconciliation, and the pledge of a blessed immortality. Amen.

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#### ON THE MEMENTO FOR THE LIVING.

Pray one for another. ST JAMES, ix. v. 19.

**I**T is not my present intention to make the same explication of these words of the apostle as I did in a former Instruction. True it is, that according to the literal sense of this invitation, or rather precept of St. James, we are obliged to extend our

prayers to all those who live in the bosom of Christianity: but though the church enjoins us to fulfil that debt of universal charity which comprehends Christians of every nation, rank and condition, yet she allows us to direct our charity in a more particular manner towards those who are more intimately connected with us either by the ties of nature or affection. With this view it is, that in the midst of the general sacrifice, she authorizes the minister and his assistants to make a particular mention of their friends, relations, and such as have any special claims to their gratitude. It is in the prayer, entitled the *Memento for the living*, that she furnishes us with an opportunity of acquitting ourselves of this tender and grateful duty. Though the mere perusal of this prayer is sufficient to show the intentions of the church in appointing it, yet an explanation of the words that compose it, may tend to give us a juster idea of the use we should make of it, and, perhaps, to point out some abuse into which we may have inadvertently fallen.

Although the principal order and form of the prayers that compose the Canon of the Mass, be as ancient as the church itself, yet it would be difficult to prove that these prayers have at all times consisted of the same words, or been repeated in the same order. As the object of the one we this day explain, is to provide the officiating minister with the means of making a special application of the sacrifice, it is probable that it formerly consisted only of these words: ‘ Be mindful, O Lord, of



thy servants, both men and women ;' to which the priest added the names of such persons as were connected with him either by the ties of blood, or by the relations of his ministry ; those to whom he stood indebted for the succours they contributed towards his subsistence, or who were recommended by different motives of gratitude, charity, or commiseration. It is possible that the church may have afterwards added the formulary which extends its application to all the assistants. What renders this conjecture more probable is, that this prayer is only alluded to in some of the ancient sacramentaries and liturgies that were most in use. The tender solicitude for the welfare of her children displayed by the church in this prayer, should make us and all the assistants regard it as a powerful means of fulfilling a multitude of duties, both of justice, charity, affection, and even of patience, by extending this particular commemoration even to our enemies.

The priest raises his voice at the beginning of this prayer, to remind the congregation that they should imitate his example, by suspending the general prayer, in order to bestow their attention on those who have a particular claim to their regard. He joins his hands and inclines his head, to signify that he is in the act of prayer, and that he prays with the most profound recollection. He then names in silence all those whom he deems it a duty to include in this commemoration ; but by a note found in certain missals, the church admonishes him only to spend a few moments in

this prayer, lest his private devotion should become an occasion of weariness and disgust to the people. The priest is even counselled to recollect, during his preparation for Mass, all such as have a claim to his remembrance, that when at the altar he may be dispensed with repeating all their names at the Memento.

Let us regard this part of the Mass as a most consoling means afforded us by the church of indulging some of the feelings that are dearest to our hearts. She teaches us to make no exception of persons, though at the same time she allows us to render to our friends and relatives love for love; to repay their benevolence, by a return of grateful sensibility to their interests; to sympathize in their sorrows, and to solicit the relief of those necessities under which they labour. She, at the same time, affords us an opportunity, but too often neglected on our part, of doing good to our enemies, by calling them to our remembrance during the time of this prayer, not in a spirit of hatred and resentment, but of charity and compassion.

Though apparently instituted in a particular manner for the priest, it imposes the same duties on the assistants. The minister should exhort those who hear him, to imitate his example in the application of this prayer, and as the time devoted to it is too short to allow an enumeration of all those who have a claim to our prayers, that they ought to employ some moments before the commencement of the holy sacrifice, in directing their

intentions before-hand to that God, who listens to the simple preparation of the heart.

The words ; *Be mindful, O Lord*, is only an expression accommodated to our manner of speaking, and cannot, of course, be considered as an attempt to investigate what is passing in the mind of God. Unlike the children of men, he is not subject to forgetfulness ; every creature is constantly in his presence : this mindfulness on his part merely consists in affording us sensible testimonies of his attention, and in pouring forth his graces and blessings upon his poor and needy creatures. ‘ *Be mindful,*’ says the royal prophet, ‘ *be mindful, O Lord, of thy servant David :*’ and in another of his psalms, ‘ *Be mindful of us, O Lord :*’ all that we demand by this form of address to the Almighty, is, that he would give us a sensible proof that our prayers are not rejected.

*Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servants, men and women* : not that these names of themselves can awaken the attention of the Almighty, or add any weight to the prayer ; no—they merely serve to remind the minister of the different necessities of those he recommends. He will call to mind, first, the person for whom he especially offers the sacrifice ; then the motives that have induced him to solicit its application. He will call all those to mind who by their prayers, their counsels, or their assistance, have helped him to support the weight of his ministry. It was formerly the practice of the church to name her benefactors aloud. We

And in the letters of St Cyprian, that he often requested to be informed of the names of those who, during his absence, had bestowed any benefactions either on the church or the poor, that he might make public mention of them at the altar. It is ordained by one of the Popes, that the benefactors of the church should be named during the holy mysteries, and not before; but as the best regulated establishments oftentimes become liable to the most dangerous abuses, St Jerome felt himself obliged vigorously to oppose such persons as made their offerings through vanity, and, in some degree, purchased the privilege of being named in this part of the sacrifice. It was doubtless by reason of this abuse that the church was induced to suppress the practice, that such of the faithful, as were disposed to deeds of charity, might have no motive to seek for any recompence in this world.

*Be mindful,* continues the priest, *of all here present*; for, independent of the general right which they have to partake of this oblation in quality of children of the church, they have a special right to the prayers of the priest, to whom they are united by the oblation, and with whom they may, in some sense, be said to offer it. But, at the same time that he makes this prayer in their behalf, he gives them a lesson in the following words, by reminding them that these prayers are only conditional, and that he has no intention to pray except for those who approach this sacrifice with a pure faith, and with sentiments of true devotion.

Were he capable of sounding the heart, and of scrutinizing its dispositions, he would formally exclude all those from any participation in these prayers, who are conducted to the altar by custom, and a mere wish to avoid singularity. But he leaves it to him who is the searcher of hearts to make this discrimination, and contents himself with addressing the Almighty in the following prayer: *Be mindful of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to thee, for whom we offer, or who themselves offer up to thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and friends.* In a prayer entirely consecrated to gratitude, the name of that prayer should correspond with its object: in other places the Mass is termed a sacrifice of propitiation, the oblation of a spotless victim; but here it was necessary to call it a sacrifice of praise, as amidst the other acts of thanksgiving, the priest has, in a special manner, to dwell upon that which has for its object the benefactions of the church.

But this prayer should not be confined to the mere mention of the faithful who offer, or for whom this sacrifice is offered, it should embrace every thing that regards them; and, therefore, the priest solicits the redemption of their souls through the pardon of all their offences; he prays for their perseverance in the ways of salvation, by supporting them in the midst of the perils by which they are surrounded, with the cheering hope of salvation; he even solicits the preservation of health, and an exemption from all the ills that trouble

the peace and happiness of life. This prayer should likewise extend to all those with whom the faithful are united by the ties of blood or friendship, or connected by the relations and duties of society. It should likewise embrace their children, relatives, friends, domestics, inferiors, and all those whom Providence has entrusted to his charge, because each of these relations imposes its particular duties, and requires those peculiar graces, which can only be demanded through Jesus Christ, and attained by the merit of his sacrifice.

*For all these things,* adds the priest at the conclusion of the prayer, *they now pay their vows to thee, the eternal, living, and true God:* that is, in offering this sacrifice through our hands, they acquit themselves of the general vow made by every Christian at his baptism, of honouring thee, and of consecrating himself entirely to thy service. This solemn obligation ought to be indelibly engraven on the minds of Christians; they should be cautious what dispositions they bring to the altar, when they know that they come thither to ratify the promises made in baptism. It is here that they are truly called upon to exercise the functions of a Christian; it is here that they more particularly imitate their divine Master, who came into the world for the purpose of offering this sacrifice, and who has rendered us partakers of his name, with no other view than to associate us to his priesthood:—a name, which of itself imports that we

are creatures anointed and consecrated to this august function.

But let us not forget, that it is to a *living and true God* that the oblation is made: *Living*, that is, eternal; to him who is consequently all-sufficient for himself, who formed us creatures in time, and, therefore, from all eternity had no need of us or of our services; as often as he deigns to accept them, he exhibits a fresh display of his mercy. Known by the attribute of eternal, he is desirous that our homages should in some degree correspond to his eternity:—that is, they should be without bounds and without reserve, they should extend to all times, they should be offered from the full plenitude of our hearts. As a *true God*, he demands that this homage should be sincere. He rejects with indignation that hypocritical piety, the offspring of affected sincerity and vain ostentation; that unsubstantial piety, which aims rather at the empty applause of the creature, than the honour and glory of the Creator. He rejects with scorn that insulting homage, which, though pronounced by the lips, makes no impression on the heart; he, who sees and judges our most secret thoughts, reprobates that suppliant posture of the body, which is belied by the proud dispositions of the soul.

My brethren, let us be watchful over ourselves; let us make our paths straight, let us banish far from our heart every feeling that is unworthy of the purity of this sacrifice: let us endeavour to render the prayers which the priest offers through

Jesus Christ in our behalf, worthy of the victim who presents them, worthy of obtaining for us, and for all those who are dear to us, the blessings of life eternal, together with the graces that are proper to conduct us thither. Amen.

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ON THE COMMUNICANTES.

I will save it for my own sake, and for the sake of David my servant.  
4th KINGS, xix. 34.

**G**OD has no other motive for saving us, than his own pure mercy. It is merely, my brethren, because he wills it, and not in consideration of any merits of our own, that he delivers us from our iniquities, and renders us partakers of his grace. Nevertheless, he has been pleased to render the exercise of this mercy dependent, in a certain degree, upon the patronage and intercession of his saints, and as he himself is the principle of their merits, we may, when invoking them, apply these words to the Almighty: *I will save you*, but it will always be *for my own sake*, and to accomplish the eternal designs of my mercy. The prayers of my friends and elect shall find acceptance according to the merciful advances I make in your regard; for my mercy, though eternal, is free and gratuitous and it is my pleasure, that, according to the order of my decrees, you should stand indebted for it to the prayers and suffrages of my servants: *for the sake of David my servant*.



Such is the foundation for that communion of saints, which the church proposes as an article of our faith ; and such the purpose of the prayer called the *Communicantes*, which is the subject of this day's Instruction. Let us meditate attentively on the object proposed by the church in this part of the Mass, and study the means of applying it with advantage.

The communion of saints, which the church continues to establish in this prayer, does not merely consist in the union of Christians among themselves, but more especially regards the right which the saints have to our homage, and that which faith gives us to their protection. In the two preceding prayers we have seen the faithful praying for each other, and the church by her ministry recommending to God all their necessities general and particular. She has forgotten nothing that can tend to the increase of faith, as well as to the peace and happiness of society ; she has prayed for her pastors and her temporal rulers, and now the same church on earth, which an equal bond of charity unites to that of Heaven, proceeds to teach us the use we ought to make of the protection of the saints who are reigning in glory.

This prayer varies according to different solemnities, and commemorates the particular mysteries of the time ; but it is to be remarked that these variations are rare, and that the church does not leave them to the discretion of her ministers ; that she has fixed the days on which any additional

words are added to the *Communicantes*, and that this variation takes place only in commemorating certain mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ: there are even some ancient missals in which no addition to this prayer is found, except on Holy Saturday; this strict attention to uniformity throughout the Canon of the Mass, should convince us of the veneration due to all the parts that compose it.

The priest, with his hands still extended, begins by calling to mind the privilege that faith confers of soliciting the succour of the saints. Though she communicates with them and honours their memory, yet the church cannot name all those who have contributed to her foundation, her propagation, her defence and instruction; however, by the choice she makes, she teaches us under what title and in what degree the saints are entitled to our confidence and veneration. She names, in the first place, the Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Indeed we may estimate the share she should have in our veneration and our prayers, by considering that the victim we are about to offer was formed in her womb, and that the blood which is about to flow upon our altars is that of her Son! She stands supereminent above all the saints, not only by the privilege of her divine maternity, but still more by the purity of her life, the humility of her heart, her tenderness and compassion towards us, and the influence she possesses with her Son. She is first by the rank she holds in Heaven, where she is placed near her Son;

above the angels, of whom she is the queen; above the saints, whose united merits and virtues are concentrated in her; she is first by the rank she holds in the church, for if Jesus Christ, according to the language of scripture, be the First-born of the priesthood, his mother, according to the analogy of faith, is the most holy of creatures, the richest of the daughters of the heavenly Jerusalem, and, consequently, entitled to a superior degree of veneration; in fine, she is first, by the right she has to our confidence, since neither in Heaven nor on earth can we find any other creature whose influence with Heaven is so great, or whose compassion for man is so tender and efficacious.

After the protection of Mary, none more effectual can be solicited than that of the apostles. The church names these according to the order of their vocation, and the rank to which they are entitled by their apostleship. They enjoyed the enviable privilege of learning from the mouth of Christ himself the value of the sacrifice we are about to offer. They offered it before us. It is through them we have been instructed, both in the manner of offering and in the prayers that accompany it; by this sacrifice we participate in that communion which constitutes their felicity in heaven, and filled them while on earth with courage and consolation. They offered it for the same ends, they derived from it the same graces and benedictions as ourselves. But there also exists in the church another order of apostles, whom she joins to the former—that is,

the glorious army of the martyrs. It would be impossible for the church to recount them all; she therefore contents herself with selecting from this numerous throng, such as were particularly distinguished for their zeal in defence of the faith, whose names are most familiar, whose victories were most brilliant, and whose labours have tended most to spread the reign of the gospel of Christ. Indeed, what can be more just, than that an honourable mention should be made of those Christian heroes during the august sacrifice? Mingled with that of the Lamb, their blood has been accepted as a perfect holocaust. They have a peculiar claim to our veneration and our confidence, since they laid down their lives to transmit to us the precious deposit entrusted to their care. They cannot refuse us their intercession with a God, who has promised never to close the ear of his mercy to the voice of blood.

In fine, to this particular mention of the apostles and martyrs, the church adds the invocation of all the saints; because the same communion that admits all the faithful to a participation of the same victim, authorizes us to invoke all those who owe their salvation to the efficacy of this sacrifice. But to make us enter more feelingly into the spirit of this communion, the church now advances a step beyond the mere commemoration, and solicits the prayers of the saints; *By whose merits and prayers, grant that we may be always defended by the help of thy protection.* We say *their* merits, though in

reality they are but the effects of the graces they have received, and may, therefore, be regarded as so many gifts of the Almighty; for God, according to the expression of St Augustine, imparts these favours with no other view than to have an opportunity of crowning them in his saints, through the mercy he thereby exercises in our regard. He rewards their faith by an increase of ours, their justice by the remission of our sins, their patience by the spirit of submission with which he inspires us under our sufferings; it is thus that, being the children of the saints, we share the inheritance which they have acquired. Observe, too, that the church does not separate their prayers from their merits, to remind us that it is grace which has sanctified them, and which alone can sanctify us; that grace is the usual effect of prayer; that prayer itself is devoid of all saving efficacy, unless offered in a state of justice, at least of a justice that is commenced; and that if we cannot like the saints pretend to offer to God a consummate justice, we should accompany the prayers they offer for us with an ardent desire, an inextinguishable thirst after justice, joined with a perfect willingness to practise what it enjoins.

The doctrine of the invocation of saints appears so indisputably established in this prayer, as to deprive the enemies of our faith of every motive for calumniating the church respecting the purity of this part of her worship. Let the partizans of heresy no longer accuse us of exalting the saints into

so many Gods—the objects of sovereign worship; of assimilating them to the Divinity itself, in the homages we offer! This prayer is a compleat confutation to all their calumnies. What is it we here demand of the saints? That through their intercession we may always be defended by the Almighty, and enjoy the blessing of his protection. What, therefore, is understood by the help of the saints, but the protection of the Almighty himself, who is the sole object of our vows and desires? To God alone we attribute that omnipotence which foresees all our necessities, and sustains us under all our tribulations; all that we ask of the friends of God, is that by the help of their prayers we may be made partakers of the divine mercy, and enjoy the aid of his protection. But as the saints derive all their influence from Jesus Christ, it is through this divine Saviour that we pray that their merits may prove effectual in our regard. Under a conviction of the importance of this communion of saints, let us accustom ourselves to recite this prayer in a spirit of fervour and faith, and recollect, that in order to reap the advantages it holds out, certain essential conditions must be complied with on our part. These obligations may be reduced to two, imitation and confidence. Imitation—because their faith, humility, zeal for religion, constancy under persecutions and sufferings, but above all their veneration for the august sacrifice, are so many lessons, as the very names themselves imply. Oh, if it were possible for us to unite the

different virtues that characterized the holy apostles and martyrs, of what happy consequences would it be productive; what a beneficial reform would it effect in our life and morals! Could we enumerate these various virtues, we should see that by faith they have overcome the world, fulfilled all justice and obtained their crown; hence the conclusion is natural, that it is by the same victories, and the same good works, that we must seek to obtain a similar recompence. A meditation on their virtues will also tend to animate our hopes; in effect, to what confidence are not those saints entitled, who were our first pastors, the founders of our holy religion, the pillars of the church; of whom, some were witnesses of the life of Jesus Christ, and imbibed at the very fountain-head a portion of that compassionate charity which engaged him to descend upon earth; while others, who were either the contemporaries of the apostles, or their immediate successors, were animated with that spirit of charity, that zeal for the salvation of souls which should induce us to entrust into their hands, with the most perfect confidence, the interests of our own.

How awful is this sacrifice, where a God is offered to a God: which is consummated in presence of a God, and of the whole assembly of the saints! Were the eye of our faith single and purified from the mist of the passions, what should we behold at the moment the priest is preparing to immolate the adorable victim? With the great St Chry-

ustom, we should behold the entire court of Heaven wrapt in awful attention to this august ceremony; we should hear the saints and angels mingling their voices with ours, their songs to our canticles of praise, their prayers to our supplications; we should behold the universal church in that state of perfect unity which forms her most essential characteristic; the church militant on earth united with the church triumphant in Heaven to offer the same victim, solicit the same graces, pour forth the same vows, and expect the same succours. We should be struck with a brilliant image of those eternal nuptials of the Lamb; where seated at his heavenly banquet, encircled by his elect, he shall satisfy them with his own substance, and inebriate them with those pure delights that can never cloy:—if we are unable to see and feel all this, it is because our faith is so feeble, our hearts so languid, and our minds so distracted during these august and awful mysteries. We are now approaching the moment, when it is to be consummated; let us, therefore, prepare to meditate in the following Instruction on the formulary that contains the words of consecration; their awful importance demands the most marked attention and the most profound veneration. Let us dispose ourselves by prayer for these sublime meditations, that they may produce in our hearts that renewal of devotion and love, which is so requisite in order to unite us to Jesus Christ, both in time and throughout eternity. Amen.



## ON THE PRAYER ' HANC IGITUR. '

" He shall put his hand upon the head of the victim, and it shall be acceptable, and help to his expiation."—LEVITICUS, i. 4.

**S**UCH is the ceremony which Moses, by the injunctions of the Almighty, prescribed to the priests of the old law, in the oblation of the victim ; such the exterior sign that announced the interior effect which their faith in Jesus Christ, the true and living victim, was to produce . When a victim is offered for sin, the priest shall stretch forth his hand, and place it upon the head of the victim : by this action he signifies, that it holds his place ; that he has merited by his crimes to be himself immolated to the anger of the Almighty ; that he would inevitably have been cut off in his sins, but for the pure compassion of his God, and that it is to the inexhaustible merits of his divine Son, of whose sacrifice this victim is a figure, that he is indebted for the expiation of his sins. Touched by dispositions like these, the Almighty will graciously incline to mercy, not in consideration of the blood of any carnal victim,—which could never prove acceptable in his sight,—but at the view of an only Son, who is the object of his eternal love, and whose sacrifice is in every respect adequate to satisfy his justice. We shall find in the prayer, which forms the subject of this Instruction, a feeling application of these words ; a satisfactory explanation of this figure, and, at the same time, abundant matter for meditation,

It is no longer Moses, but Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Legislator, who is about to speak to us, and to teach us by the mouth of his church, the true and effectual method of offering this victim of propitiation. My brethren, let us approach with docility of heart, and lend an attentive ear to these divine lessons.

The prayer, which begins with these words; *Hanc igitur*, is, like the preceding, said, in many missals, to be *within the action*—that is, its intimate connection with the words of consecration, renders it so important, that many theologians have not hesitated to consider it as essential to the validity of the sacrament; as a prayer that the minister must necessarily recite, in order to fulfil the action of the sacrifice. The priest, who, during the preceding prayers, has held his hands extended towards heaven, now unites them, and placing them over the bread and wine that are to be consecrated, says; ‘We therefore beseech thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this oblation of our servitude, as also of thy whole family: dispose our days in thy peace, preserve us from eternal damnation, and rank us in the number of thine elect. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

*We, therefore, beseech thee;*—Such is the form which the church has twice employed, during the Canon, to show the intimate connection that exists between these different prayers; they are all a consequence and continuation of each other. Whether in expressing her praise, or her gratitude to the Al-

mighty ; whether in addressing the blessed spirits, or claiming the intercession of the saints ; her ultimate object is, to obtain the same graces. She repeated, after the preface ; *We, therefore, humbly pray and beseech thee* : and she now employs these words ; *We, therefore, beseech thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this oblation*, to remind us that the application of this sacrifice can only be obtained by prayer.

The prayer we have just cited, is sometimes varied by the introduction of some additional expressions relative to certain particular solemnities. During the octaves of Easter and Pentecost, the church prays in a special manner for those who have been admitted to the sacrament of baptism ; and though she no longer adheres to the custom of restricting the administration of this holy rite to those particular seasons, yet she retains the practice of praying for the Catechumens immediately before the consecration.

It is also termed ; *The oblation of our servitude* ; and let it be remembered, that in uttering this expression, the priest speaks in his own name ; for, though he holds the place, and fulfils the functions, of the Sovereign High Priest, he is not less a servant on that account : he is not less obliged to acknowledge his dependence, and the offering he makes of the body and blood of Christ, is an act of this acknowledgment : he ought to unite himself to the victim that is immolated, and thereby atone for all the acts of disobedience and rebellion which have rendered him culpable in the eyes of God. And

after his example, all the faithful should consider themselves as so many slaves, who were once bartered to iniquity, to deceit, and to Satan who is the father of lies and deceit; but as now ransomed by the blood of a God, and consequently bound to serve this new master, who has paid an infinite price for their ransom. In fine, it is with a view constantly to keep us in mind of the sovereign dominion which God holds over his creatures, and the Redeemer over the souls which he has purchased, that the church has ordained this sacrifice to be offered as a homage of our servitude. It is also the homage *and the oblation of thy whole family*—of thy church which thou hast brought forth upon the cross, and chosen for thy spouse; to whom thou hast communicated thy spirit, and who daily presents thee with so many pledges of thy love: it is the offering she presents thee in token of her dependence, her gratitude, and her love. This oblation embraces every thing that appertains to her; here there is no division between herself and her children. All who profess the same faith immolate also the same victim, unite in the same prayers, and solicit the same benedictions; so that, should this sacrifice be offered in the remotest corner of the earth; should the minister be surrounded but by a handful of her children, still would it be the offering of thy whole family.

This whole family, with united voice, demands that Thou wouldst not reject their sacrifice; and it urges the demand in the certainty of being heard.

It is not two or three that are gathered together in thy name, but all thy children who come to offer thee a holy violence: and what do they present? Not one of those oblations which thou holdest in abhorrence, but that sacrifice of praise, that offering of the heart, of an humble and contrite heart, which thou canst never reject: they are, therefore, privileged to demand: *That thou wouldst graciously accept their oblation.*

If in compliance with the request and the hopes of thy whole family, thou shouldst condescend to accept it with a favourable regard, it will be the means of *disposing our days in thy peace*—a peace, uniting all the effects of this sacrifice, and destined to conciliate heaven with earth. Our days here below are days of trouble and continual conflict: of troubles in conscience, which is perpetually haunted by the remembrance of our sins; of conflicts with flesh and blood, which expose us to perpetual agitation and alarm; of conflicts with an infernal foe, who is jealous of our rights, and ever seeking to deprive us of our eternal inheritance; of conflicts with our own brethren, whose interests, inclinations and characters are at perpetual variance; of conflicts, in fine, with our own hearts, whose waywardness and instability are productive of so many painful and distressing sensations, of such perpetual and humiliating contradictions.

What, but this sacrifice which we offer thee, O my God, can end so grievous a warfare, and restore our hearts to order and tranquillity, by puri-

fyng our consciences from dead works ; by furnishing us with weapons against our mortal foe ; by weakening the law of the members, in order to strengthen that of the spirit ; by fixing the natural inconstancy of our minds ; by uniting all those in one heart and one mind, whom thou art about to nourish with the same bread, by inspiring them with a love for thy precepts, and a relish for true wisdom :—thus shall our days be established in unalterable peace ; in that peace which is justly thine, since thou art its principle and end.

After this, what right can Satan claim over us ? Enfranchized from the slavery of sin, we are no longer the children of death, no longer the victims of reprobation. Has not Jesus Christ by the virtue of his sacrifice *preserved us from eternal damnation* ? Has not the hand-writing that stood against us, been torn down and nailed with him to the cross ? Admitted by thy loving-kindness to a participation of the fruit of this sacrifice, is there any one, O Lord, who need tremble at the effects of thy justice ? No : from the recesses of thy sanctuary I will address the enemy of mankind in the words which one of thy saints repeated on his death-bed : ‘Hence infernal foe ! there is nothing in me that thou canst claim as thine. The blood with which I am covered, has washed me from all my iniquities, destroyed all the traces of sin, and re-established me in all my former privileges. Hence, into that place of torment, prepared for thee, and all thy rebellious accomplices.’ Yes, for him and

his unhappy followers is that weight of condemnation reserved, from which I am delivered by the efficacy of this sacrifice. Behold me already associated with the saints and the elect of God ; it is in their holy company that I offer the sacrifice. Every thing that surrounds me is holy. The altar is holy by its consecration, and the minister by the unction with which he has been sanctified. The victim that is offered is holiness in its very essence; the faithful are holy by their vocation; the saints, whom I invoke, by their election; myself am sanctified by the privileges conferred in baptism. What more, therefore, can I ask of the Lord? What—but that in his mercy he would never separate me from the flock to which I am associated; that on the awful accounting day he would graciously call to mind that I was ever ambitious to claim a place in the number of those who rendered him the homage of this sacrifice; that as he is pleased at present to account me as one of the living members of his church, so at the end of time he would vouchsafe of his infinite goodness *to rank me in the number of his Elect.*

Such is the nature of the demand which the church instructs us to make in this prayer; but to make it in a becoming spirit, how many essential conditions are there, how many requisite dispositions in which we have, perhaps, till this day, been deficient! Have we avoided with sufficient caution the dangerous company of those sinners, whose unhappy state should fill us with a just

alarm? Have we always walked in the presence of God with the meekness and docility that characterize the flock of Christ, in which we pray to be enrolled? For we must never forget, that the altar is not less the tribunal of his justice, than the throne of his mercy; and that the awful separation, which shall prove a subject either of eternal joy, or eternal misery to the Christian, daily takes place at the moment of the sacrifice. Amidst the mingled multitudes of the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, that crowd our temples to join in the celebration of these awful mysteries, the Almighty with a single glance of his eye discriminates the just man from the sinner; so that this prayer may be regarded on the part of the church, as a sort of separation of the sheep from the goats, made by anticipation in the name of Jesus Christ. When, therefore, we unite ourselves to this tender mother, let each one of us enter into judgment with himself, and consider himself as placed in that condition, which divine Justice would assign him, were the secret of its judgments to be that moment revealed. Dictated by a spirit of humility and contrition of heart, may this condemnation which every sinner passes on himself, be rendered conducive to his spiritual improvement. What am I about to demand of the Almighty?—should he say to himself—that my oblation may be acceptable? Yet these hands which presume to offer it are full of iniquities. The sincerity of this homage of my servitude and my heart, is belied by a spirit of



pride and disobedience. The object of this sacrifice is to appease the anger of the Lord—yet I continue to arouse his indignation by fresh outrages. It is designed to shed the balm of peace on my soul—but I read in the Scripture, that there is no peace for the wicked ; and I feel the force of this awful truth, in the confusion that reigns in my heart. I pray, that by virtue of this sacrifice, the Almighty would preserve me from eternal damnation—yet every step I am at present advancing, plunges me deeper in the crimes that lead to it. I pray that I may be ranked in the number of the Elect—that favoured flock, which the good Shepherd keeps continually under the eye of his watchful mercy ; yet vain would be the attempt to conceal the truth—that from the moment I had the unhappiness to wander from the fold, I have only followed delusion, and listened to the voice of hirelings. What, therefore, do I demand as often as I repeat this prayer of the church in unworthy dispositions ? What, but call down upon myself the most terrible and alarming imprecations !

Preserve us, O God, from so great a misery ! vouchsafe graciously to accept the prayers we now offer thee, as well for all sinners who shall henceforth assist at this adorable sacrifice, as for those faithful souls who are here present. Grant us so clear and edifying a proof of their advancement in piety, that we may have no hesitation to reckon them in the number of thy children here, till thou thyself shalt vouchsafe to rank them in the number of thine Elect hereafter. Amen.

## ON THE PRAYER ' QUAM OBLATIONEM.'

He spoke, and they were made. Ps. xxxii. v. 9.

**I**T is to the external works of Almighty power, that these words of the prophet are applied. We know that all things were created at the command of God; that it was his *fiat* which endowed nothingness with fecundity, and gave to created beings their measure, their fitness, and their form: 'He spoke, and they were made.' Far different from man, who can neither work without fatigue, nor accomplish his purpose without laborious effort, the Almighty formed but a single act of his will, and all creatures, spiritual and corporal, obeyed his voice without resistance or delay. It is the same God who is about to speak at the moment of consecration, and whose word is to produce effects infinitely more astonishing than the creation of the world and all the wonders it contains. Before entering on this most solemn part of her service, the church is anxious to dispose her children to listen with the most profound and awful attention. The prayer which immediately precedes the consecration, and which forms the subject of our present Instruction, will produce this effect, if in meditating thereon, we enter feelingly into the sentiments it contains. Let us listen to what the ancient Fathers have said on this subject, and compare their ideas with those we ourselves have till at present entertained: we may, perhaps, be induced

to confess, that our previous want of fervour arose from neglecting to make them the object of our serious study and meditation.

Although the prayer beginning *Quam oblationem*, is derived from tradition, and consequently can bear no comparison with the words which Christ himself pronounced, and which are destined to operate the greatest of our mysteries; yet they have so intimate and so indispensable a connection with this same mystery, and the words by which it is effected, that from age to age, the fathers of the church have not hesitated to regard them as forming a part of the consecration. St Ambrose terms them heavenly words; St Paulinus attributes the same efficacy to this prayer as to the words that follow it. Origen gives indiscriminately the name of consecration both to the words of Jesus Christ, and to the benedictions that precede it; and in the profession of faith which the church exacted from Berengarius, in a council held at Rome towards the close of the eleventh century, the heresiarch is desired to confess that the body and blood of Christ are really and substantially present in the holy Eucharist, by means of the *sacred prayer*, and the words of Jesus Christ. Not that the church attributes to these words, which she has joined to those of consecration, the same virtue with those pronounced by Jesus Christ. It is an article of faith, that the substances of bread and wine are not changed till the moment the priest has pronounced the words of Jesus Christ; but it was essential to

the sacrament, that the intention of the church which offers it should be manifested. No priest, therefore, can operate this august sacrament validly, unless his intentions are conformable to those of the divine spouse of the Lamb; now in the words of this prayer he finds the sentiments of the church clearly and determinately expressed. If therefore it is correct to say that the words, *This is my body—this is my blood*, operate the mystery; it is equally correct to say, that the words which compose the prayer, *Quam oblationem*, are preparatory to it.

The priest begins this prayer with hands joined before his breast, and he separates them only to make three signs of the cross upon the gifts that are to be offered. He first makes three over the entire oblation, and then a separate one on the substance of the bread and on the substance of the wine. It is needless to repeat, that the use of frequent signs of the cross in the administration of the sacraments, is intended to show that they derive their whole efficacy from the cross; in the present instance, especially, the observation would be quite superfluous, because the sacrifice we are about to offer is the very same with that of the cross. None among the faithful, who have been at all instructed, can fail to remark, that the nearer the minister approaches the awful moment when the victim is to be offered in an unbloody manner, the more reason he has to employ that sign which tends so strongly to call to mind the oblation heretofore made in a

bloody manner. An explanation of the prayer itself will convince us of this important truth.

‘Do thou, O God, vouchsafe in all respects to bless, approve, ratify and accept this oblation ; that it may be made for us the body and blood of thy most beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Is it possible for so great a mystery to be explained in fewer words? *Do thou vouchsafe*; we acknowledge no other right to demand a favour of this magnitude, than what flows from thy pure mercy ; we have no other hope than in thy loving-kindness, which can never reject our sincere petitions. *Do thou vouchsafe, O God.* Thou who, as God, dost what is best pleasing to thy divine Majesty ; Thou who, as the source of justice, dost desire the abolition of sin and the re-establishment of justice ; Thou who, as bounty itself, dost demand that the sinner should be justified and live : it is to Thee that our prayers are addressed.

We entreat thee to exert thy marvellous power in favour of this oblation. What we offer thee are thy gifts ; but these material and insensible creatures are incapable of moving thee to mercy : we present them to thee, because thy Son himself has chosen them, and this choice has rendered these gifts precious, and exalted them to the dignity of a pure and spotless oblation. He has also chosen them as a means to shed abroad his most abundant benedictions ; and we therefore pray thee, that this oblation may be *in all respects blessed* ;—that the blessing conferred on them may comprehend

every kind of benediction; that it may contain the germ of all graces, and the principle of all benedictions; that it may fulfil all our desires, relieve all our necessities, and satisfy all our obligations.

We pray that this oblation may be *blessed*;—that it may no longer be confounded with those material and perishable gifts, which, though they may receive a benediction, are unable to impart it; that wherever this is carried, it may spread around the same benedictions by which it has itself been sanctified; that it may be *approved*, and not rejected like those victims which the Almighty holds in abhorrence; that he who offers it, and those for whom it is offered, may not be repulsed like the fratricide Cain of old: that it may be *ratified*—so that we may never witness that change of sacrifice, which Israel experienced; but may behold the accomplishment of those words of the prophet, wherein he promises that a pure and spotless oblation should be offered from the rising to the setting sun, in all places and at all times, even to the consummation of ages: that it may be *reasonable*—very different, of course, from those senseless victims immolated in the old law, which were unable by any act of their will, to atone for the abuse which man had made of his; but here may the victim be truly reasonable by becoming the body, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of him who is infinite intelligence, and reason in its very essence. That it may be *acceptable*:—indeed, if acceptable in itself, it cannot fail to be so when it

becomes his only begotten Son, the object of his eternal love : may it be acceptable when presented by our hands, that we, with the Son, may become the delight of the eternal Father, and the objects of his loving-kindness. The church, therefore, seems to lay a stress upon these words ; *May it be made for us* : To the Almighty it necessarily becomes an acceptable object, by the full atonement offered thereby to the divine Majesty for the outrages received from man : it becomes so in our regard, by the gracious application which his mercy is pleased to make of this sacrifice, by accepting it in our stead, and by giving us a right to the mercy and indulgence it has merited for us : *That it may be made for us the body and blood of thy most beloved Son.*

In pronouncing these words, I am forcibly reminded of that emphatic expression of the Scripture, by which the Almighty commanded the light to exist : *May it be made for us*, says the church, *the body and blood of Christ* ; this natural and simple expression at once marks the liveliness of her faith and the energy of her hope. Assured of the effect of her demand, she employs but a single word to operate this effect. At her command the *well-beloved Son of the Father* descends upon the altar under the sacramental elements. What a change ! That of darkness to light is but the merest shadow of this prodigy ; and when I compare these two expressions : *Let there be light* : and *May it be made the body and blood of Christ* ; I confess that the lat-

ter prodigy makes me lose sight of the former : in the one I behold a brilliant display of the power, in the other an astonishing effort of the mercy, of my God. Henceforth, therefore, I will repeat with fresh transports of love and gratitude ; *May it be made for us the body and blood of Christ*. Instead of this visible bread, let the invisible manna, the bread of angels, the food of the Elect, the wine which produces virginal innocence and purity, be substituted in place of these grosser elements; may it, as he has ordained, and as I desire—may it be made the pledge of my redemption, the bond of my election, the operative principle of my sanctification. *May it be made the body of Christ*, in presence of the angels who adore, the saints who glorify, the church who invokes, the ministers who offer, and the faithful who expect it with a holy ardour ; and may the God, who condescends to operate this prodigy in our favour, find nothing in us henceforward repugnant to the character of well-beloved children, associated to Jesus Christ—children who belong to him, because they have been purchased at a price far exceeding all the riches of this world.

I must not terminate my explanation of this prayer, without offering some words of advice as to the most natural manner of applying the expressions that compose it. This advice I shall borrow from an ancient author. ‘ We entreat,’ says he, ‘ the Supreme Majesty to *bless this oblation*, in order that the benedictions conferred thereon may



ultimately redound to us; we demand that it may be *approved*, that we ourselves may thereby be enrolled in the book of life, and be numbered with the Elect of God, and the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; we pray that it may be *ratified*, under the hope that we ourselves may be accounted in the number of those whom Jesus Christ has included in the bowels of his mercy; we entreat that it may be *reasonable*, with a view that we may no longer be regarded as victims without intelligence, subject only to the dictates of sense and of our disorderly appetites; we solicit the divine mercy, that it may be regarded as *an acceptable host*, in order that we, who by our sins have rendered ourselves objects of horror and abomination in the eyes of God, may become identified, in some degree, with his only Son, the object of his eternal complacency and love.'

Nothing, I think, can be added to the solidity of these observations. The Christian who considers it as a duty to prepare his heart by reflections of this nature, as often as he unites with the priest in prayer, will find in this holy practice such principles as are proper to enlighten his faith, nourish his piety and animate his devotion: and as these words immediately precede the great action of the sacrifice, they will effectually dispose him to reap the full advantages which this sacred oblation is so fully calculated to confer. I therefore invite you to meditate seriously on these words, as preparatory to others of still more awful and mysterious

import. In the next Instruction we shall fix the eyes of our faith upon the words of consecration ; what preparation of mind and heart is, therefore, requisite on our part to meditate worthily on objects of such importance ! Religion itself, however enlightened in her dogmas, and sublime in her mysteries, has nothing to offer so august and holy as this, since the words we are about to contemplate contain the principle of true happiness in time, and the germ of unfading and immortal bliss. Amen.

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#### ON THE CONSECRATION.

Do this in remembrance of me. LUKE, chap. xxii. 19.

**L**ET us be cautious, my brethren, not to confound this precept with those painful injunctions, those rigorous commands which the Almighty formerly laid upon his people. These words are expressive of a sacrifice very different in its nature from that which God required from his servant Abraham, to comply with which was to stifle in the bosom every feeling of paternal tenderness ; far different too from those which Jesus Christ so often prescribes in his Gospel, of renouncing whatever is most dear to us, of plucking out the eye and cutting off the foot that offends, of crucifying the flesh, dying to ourselves, and carrying our cross. Here Jesus Christ exacts nothing at our hands, but what he has previously bestowed. The victim demanded is

of infinite value; yet the offering is found in the very command to offer. *Do this in remembrance of me*:—Of all the precepts of my law, this is the one of which I am most jealous, because it is the strongest proof of my mercy, and enjoins an act of obedience most salutary in its effects. *Do this in remembrance of me*:—It is a precept equally suited to all the faithful, to all states and conditions of life; it fulfils every obligation, and provides for every necessity. *Do this in remembrance of me*, and be assured that it is myself who speak by the mouth of the priest, who act through the medium of his ministry, and immolate myself with the spiritual sword placed in his hands. *Do this in remembrance of me*;—let faith transport you to the scene, the time and the circumstances in which I consummated this great sacrifice, and let this same faith inspire you with the like feelings that animated me on that memorable occasion. Behold in these few words, the object, the spirit and the end of the sacramental words that form the subject of this day's Instruction! To a subject of such moment, I solicit a renewal of all your fervour and attention.

In the present instance we need not be solicitous to retrace the antiquity of this prayer, or to explore its origin amidst the obscurity of history, in order to ascertain its true signification. It is incontestable that the words; *This is my body—this is my blood*, were pronounced by Jesus Christ, and that they have been transmitted to us without undergoing the slightest alteration. But it is a matter of

importance to consider the name which the church has always given to this part of the Mass, and the practice she has always observed respecting it. The Fathers term it the action and consecration: *the action*, because Jesus Christ truly and efficaciously acts for us and in our name:—indeed, there is nothing that he operates in the whole order of nature, which so properly merits the name of action. It is the greatest and the most excellent of actions, both as to its principle, its nature, and its end. In its principle, because he acts by whom all things were made; and, in acting, restores, sanctifies, and quickens every thing. In its nature, for this action is properly the only one in our religion; all that the church either says or does, bears so intimate a relation thereto, that there is not a prayer or benediction but what derives from thence all its merit and value. In its end, because the action tends solely to the glory of the Almighty, who being the centre of all perfection, is there honoured, sanctified, and propitiated in a manner worthy of his greatness.

As this is an action on the part of Jesus Christ, so should it be on ours: we should act with him and through him; our mind should be employed in believing, and our heart in loving him; our body in being humbled, and our will in being immolated before him. As the action of the head is communicated to all the members of his mystical body the church, she should therefore participate in this august action; the church of heaven, by the praises

and canticles she chaunts in honour of this divine victim; the church on earth by the profound zeal and fervency of her homage; and the church suffering, by the solid and consoling hopes she derives from this sacrifice. It must also tend to confound the enemies of the church, fill the reprobate with despair at not having profited by the terms of mercy it held out, and the rebel angels with envy and rage, at the view of its bounteous effects to fallen man.

It is also called the *Consecration*—a word generally applied to things destined for sacred purposes: as if it were said; This, by its destination, is holy and sacred as the God to whose service it is devoted. The very import of this word might furnish us with useful reflections on the nature and effects of this part of the Mass. It is a true consecration that the church imparts to these gifts, which, vile and material as they are by their nature, become holy by their destination, by the benedictions and prayers that prepare, and the dispositions of faith and charity that present them: It is a true consecration, by the change which Jesus Christ makes of these elements into his body and blood; they become a pure, holy, perfect, and reasonable victim, which, from its very nature, cannot fail to appease the justice, honour the wisdom, second the mercy, and correspond to the dignity of the Godhead. It is also a consecration in our regard; for as we are immolated by the union we hold with our Chief, we are, by this very action, so far consecrated to

the Lord, that every sin on our part becomes a kind of impiety and sacrilege. And yet how little do we attend to the importance of this consecration ; how seldom do we reflect, that in this part of the Mass the church devotes us to the Lord, that this vow is renewed as often as the action is repeated, and that we ourselves ratify it as often as we assist, and violate it as often as we neglect to be present, at the sacrifice. Yes, we become guilty of perjury, as often as we leave the altar without a sincere desire of atoning for our sins by repentance, of establishing in our hearts the reign of justice, of fulfilling towards God all the duties which this quality of the victim requires. Hence it is that the very name assigned to this part of the Mass, contains an inexhaustible fund of salutary meditation.

The church affords us no less instruction in the circumstances that precede and accompany this solemn action : she has placed it, in some measure, in the centre of all her other prayers, to give us to understand that we can never approach the altar with too great a degree of preparation, nor too high an idea of its importance. As every thing preceding this prayer has served to announce its excellence, and to inspire us with the holiest dispositions, so every thing that follows it will tend to apply the fruit thereof, and to warm our hearts with gratitude.

But at the moment of this solemn action, the church points out fresh dispositions and inspires new sentiments of devotion, by the ceremonies she

observes. A veil formerly divided the sanctuary from the place appointed for the ministers, who did not assist at the altar; this veil was drawn at the beginning of the Canon, a custom still retained in several cathedrals; but at the moment of the consecration, it was thrown open, that the whole congregation might more intimately unite themselves to this adorable mystery; and in those churches where the veil is not used, the sound of a bell announces to all present, that the greatest of mysteries is at that moment operating. The priest prostrates himself, as far as his situation will allow, both before and after he has exposed the august victim to the adoration of the people, who are themselves inclined in an attitude of profound humiliation in the divine presence. The Carthusians still retain the practice of entirely prostrating themselves before the altar, and, on certain days, they remain stretched in this posture till the very conclusion of the Canon. If fully instructed in the nature of the awful mystery at this moment operated, we should find no difficulty in comprehending, that of all others this position is most proper to honour it in a worthy and becoming manner. But may we not consider him who said to his people; ‘ Rend your hearts and not your garments,’ as thus addressing us at this moment: ‘ It is not the mere bending of the knee and the constraint of the body that I demand; if this posture be not the faithful expression of a heart that is truly inclined towards me by humility, of a soul that is annihilated at my

feet in a spirit of contrition and grief. What imports it, that during this awful action your body remain immoveable, if your mind is revolving the same projects of ambition and injustice; if all your ways announce the same inconstancy in good, and the same inclination to evil?

‘My soul has adhered to the pavement of thy temple,’ is the strong expression of the royal prophet: he was, therefore, persuaded that nothing but self-abasement and humility of heart could honour the God of all sanctity. But is it possible that Christians can assume the same posture without holding the same language; that their souls should still adhere to the world, while their bodies are prostrate at the foot of the altar!

The principal object of this ceremony is to honour and imitate the profound humiliation of Jesus Christ, who at this moment really prostrates himself before the majesty of his Father. Could he descend lower?—he who as God is equal to the Father from all eternity; who as man is seated at the right hand of the divine Majesty; who as the Holy of holies is so far separated from sinners—could he manifest a more perfect renunciation, or a more profound humility? he who is the King of kings has chosen an altar for his throne; he who is the ruler of nations yields obedience to the voice of a priest; he who is the judge of the living and the dead, submits himself to the rigorous judgment of his eternal Father. O astonishing example of humility and self-renunciation! How perfectly dost



Thou honour that God, who alone is great, to whom alone belong honour, and dominion ! When therefore I behold him in the hands of the priest, elevated and exposed to my adoration, what should be my thoughts ? Perhaps the following is the language in which I should address myself : No ! however humble the posture I assume before this adorable victim, it can never equal his abasement in presence of his eternal Father. Jesus Christ is man ; he is also a victim ; and under this twofold relation he is infinitely below his Father. I am a man and a sinner, and by this twofold character, humiliating as it is, I am allied to Jesus Christ ; I adore his divinity ; I tremble before his justice ; I am confounded at the view of his mercy ; I am dazzled at the splendid prodigies of his almighty power : but at the same time I behold in him a brother, in some measure the partner of my sins and the chastisement due to them, since he takes upon himself all their shame and punishment, and secures me against the rigours of divine indignation.

How is it possible, therefore, that I can bring to this sacrifice so cold and languid, not to say so proud and rebellious, a heart ? Had Jesus Christ renewed this prodigy of love but once during my whole life, perhaps I might then have been touched at an event so long expected, and by whose return I could never be benefited ; perhaps I might then have been induced to bring a heart better prepared and more fitted to enjoy the graces and blessings of this sacrifice. What ! because my continual necessities and

his infinite mercy move him to renew this prodigy every instant; because I can daily offer the same victim, and apply the same remedies to the daily wounds of my soul, am I, therefore, to live in a fatal insensibility to my spiritual evils, a culpable indifference to my daily necessities, and a criminal ingratitude at the view of his numberless graces! Shall I presume to approach this sacrifice in a spirit of wilful distraction and sacrilegious indevotion! Surely such a prodigy would be not less astonishing than that of a God immolated for my offences.

May these reflections awaken us to such feelings of devotion as no habit of assisting at the holy sacrifice may be able to weaken! May we be so intimately united to Jesus Christ, as really and effectually to offer with him. An exposition of the words that compose this part of the Mass, will furnish us with fresh motives for entering into these necessary dispositions. If the very names and ceremonies employed by the church, afford such means of exciting our faith, how effectual must the words themselves be that constitute the essence of the sacrifice, if made the object of attentive meditation! Let us pray, that the truths we have just heard, may fructify in our hearts, and prepare us to profit still more by those I am about to unfold; that the word of life may not be received by us in vain; that it may not return to God without producing its intended effects, both for time and eternity. Amen.

## ON THE WORDS OF CONSECRATION.

Thou hast the words of eternal life. ST. JOHN, vi. 69.

**S**UCH is the testimony which the most favoured of the apostles rendered to Jesus Christ, immediately after the Saviour had announced the great mystery which forms the subject of this present Instruction: but if he acknowledged the simple promise of this mystery to contain the words of life, what ought we to think of the words themselves that operate it? They are truly words of life, since by virtue thereof Jesus Christ imparts life, in a certain degree, even to insensible elements, by converting them into his living body and life-giving blood. By the same means he also imparts the life of grace to the faithful soul, which by the application of this mystery, is touched, converted and changed. In his divine mouth, they likewise become productive of eternal life, by bestowing a pledge, and communicating the first fruits, of a blessed immortality. With the holy confidence of the apostle, thus should we also address our Lord and Saviour before meditating on the awful words of consecration: *Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Different in their effect from those which called man out of nothing, formed innumerable creatures for his use, and ordained each species to increase and multiply; these act upon the heart, they form the interior and spiritual man, they exalt those who participate in this mystery to

a new order of creatures, infinitely superior to beings without intelligence; and instead of a perishable, they insure an eternal life. But let us not anticipate the reflections which the words of consecration will shortly furnish: let us listen thereto with a religious awe, and bestow all that attention and recollection which a lively faith should inspire.

The part of the Mass which the church has assigned for the words of consecration, is in the midst of an abridged recital of the circumstances that accompanied the institution of the holy Eucharist. On such an occasion this recital cannot be regarded as merely historical: it forms, in some degree, the conclusion of the preceding prayer; and if the Fathers of the church have not hesitated to confer the title of *divine* on the words of this prayer, the recital that follows it must itself be divine; not merely from the circumstance of its being taken from the inspired writings, but because it clearly traces out the origin and institution of this august mystery. It is through Jesus Christ that we have besought the Almighty graciously to accept the victim—that victim which is no less than Christ himself; ‘Who, the day before he suffered, took bread into his holy and venerable hands, and with his eyes lifted up towards heaven, giving thanks to thee Almighty God, his Father, he blessed, brake, and gave it to his disciples, saying; Take and eat ye all of this, for this is my Body.’

How many mysteries are contained in this short recital! It is Jesus Christ who acts and speaks; he

who loved his own, and loved them to the end, he who wished to treat them, not as man destined to walk in his train, but as familiar friends admitted to his banquet ! It is Jesus Christ, he who is eyes to the blind and feet to the lame ; who is the comforter of the afflicted, the restorer of the infirm and desponding, the victorious conqueror of death and of hell ! It is Jesus, the lover of souls, he who seeks out the sinner, and softens the most stubborn and flinty hearts. What may we not expect from an action which he was solicitous to announce so long before-hand, and which he expressed so lively an ardour to perform, by pointing out so minutely the place and the circumstances of its fulfilment ! It is Jesus, he whose very name inspires confidence, whose every step was attended by consolation and peace, whose only desire was to convert the favoured people entrusted to him by his Father, and to unite them to himself. Ah, his disciples were not yet sufficiently enlightened, or they would have exclaimed with all the impatience of the prophet of old : Show us, O Lord, a sign for our consolation ! But he anticipated their demand ; he chose for this wonderful display of his goodness *the day before he suffered*, that this mystery might form one and the same connected action with that of his great sacrifice, and might stand as an incontestible proof, that the same charity which inspired the one, was also productive of the other ; that his unbloody might be a real representation of his bloody sacrifice, and prove a subject of tender con-

solation amidst the grief which his death would naturally inspire; in fine, that when on the cross, he might declare with confidence, that all was consummated on the part of his mercy.

*The day before he suffered*; that is, at the moment when his mind was engaged with the thoughts of his sacrifice, when Judas was meditating his treacherous designs, when the synagogue was plotting his destruction, when the justice of his Father had fixed the terms of reparation—at that moment *Jesus took bread*. Let us not be shocked at the choice he makes of the most common elements; he wishes to put our faith to the trial by the simplicity of the resources he employs, and yet not to alarm our timidity by surrounding the mystery with any imposing pomp or preparation. He chooses bread, our most common nourishment; that on which God has so far rendered life dependent, that it is nearly as essential to our existence as the air we breathe; bread which is equally the support of the rich and the poor, of the strong and the infirm. He takes bread, as being a symbol of all the graces and effects he has attached to this most important means of salvation, which he is now in the act of instituting: he consecrates it afresh to nourish the indigent, to strengthen the weak, to perpetuate life in him who has received it from his bounty; and he operates all these wonders in the spiritual order, as habitually as his Providence performs them in the visible world. With the same all-powerful hand that balances this vast uni-

verse, and upholds every creature, with the same *holy and venerable hands he took bread*: justly are these hands styled holy, since they impart a sanctity to whatever they touch.

Let the cloak of an Elias communicate the two-fold spirit that inspired its possessor; let the bones of an Eliseus recal to life the corpse that had been cast into his tomb: I behold in these prodigies a mere emanation of that divine virtue with which the hands of the adorable Jesus are endued. It is from heaven, where the throne of the Godhead is established, that this wondrous virtue descends; it is to that abode of his glory, therefore, that *Jesus raises his eyes*. He alone has a right to raise his head thither: that head which has never bowed beneath the ignominious yoke of sin, which was never bent towards earth by carnal and terrestrial desires. To this anointed and kingly head alone these humbling words could never be applied; ‘Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return:’ on the contrary, to Him who triumphed over the grave, must that expression of the prophet be justly referred: ‘Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy one to see corruption.’ As for us, my brethren, let us cast down our eyes, while his are raised towards heaven; let us turn our regard interiorly, and survey the miseries and infirmities of our souls; let us never lose sight of the abyss of nothingness from which we were taken, and the everlasting miseries from which we have been delivered. Above all, let us unite in the acts of thanksgiving which

accompany these external expressions. *He gives thanks to his eternal Father*, and for what? Because his Father lends a favourable ear as often as he invokes him; because his Father loves and cherishes his own; because his Father, in thus charging him with humiliations and sufferings, prepares for him, and for those whom he has chosen, an inestimable weight of glory; because the powers of darkness, who are shortly to triumph, shall in their very victory find confusion and defeat; because the sting with which death aimed a mortal blow, shall turn to the destruction of death himself. He gives thanks for all the benefits of his sacrifice, and *blesses the bread which he holds in his hands*; or rather by this action, blesses the numerous family, which he is about to form to himself upon the cross; that church which he is to bring forth in the pangs of his passion; that multitude gathered from all nations, who were once the objects of his wrath, but are now the children of his mercy. The benedictions which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob, and Israel upon his twelve children, were but figures of this. Behold here the Father who promised his apostles not to leave them orphans; who in one single benediction insures them every other kind of blessing; the fat of the earth, and the dews of heaven, the benedictions both of time and eternity. Immediately after this benediction, *he breaks the bread and gives to his disciples*; an action that proves, in the most striking and effectual manner, the truth of these words which he ad-



dressed to one of his disciples ; ‘ I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised : and how I am straitened until it be accomplished ! ’ ‘ With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you : ’—as if he had said : my blood is impatient to flow for your redemption ; my body with joy anticipates the bruises it is destined to suffer, since they will have the virtue to heal your wounds ; the bitter anguish that overwhelms my soul, at the view of the ignominious death that awaits me, becomes a subject of consolation, under the idea that it shall prove a remedy for all your evils. Receive it, therefore, with all the ardour I experience in offering the sacrifice ; partake thereof with the same love I testify in presenting it. I know that you are not all worthy of this favour, yet I make no exceptions ; this nourishment is prepared for all, and is designed to prove beneficial to all ; even those, whom their present unworthiness keeps at a distance from my table, may find in this sacrifice a powerful motive to incite them to the dispositions proper for approaching it. *Eat ye all of this, for this is my Body* ; what, most gracious Saviour, can this material bread which thou holdest in thy hands be thy body ? Can the bread which thou dost break and share with thy apostles be thy body ? Can that bread, which the most discerning eyes are unable to distinguish from plain and natural bread, which possesses its usual taste, and produces its natural effects, can that be thy body ?—Yes it is my body : can you doubt the truth of

my words, after all the testimonies I have given you of my Almighty power; after the miracles I have performed before your eyes; can you doubt of my love after the many tender proofs you have received from the time you were first called to follow your Lord and Master? I repeat it; *This is my Body*.—But, Lord, in every other prodigy that thou hast performed, our eyes have beheld it: The water changed into wine at the nuptial feast at Canaan, formed at once the resource and the consolation of the bridegroom and his guests; the bread which thou didst twice multiply upon the mountain, our own hands distributed; we beheld the dead that were raised to life by thy divine power; we united our voices with the praises given thee by the blind who were restored to sight, and the lepers that were purified: here we see nothing but bread, touch nothing but bread, taste nothing but bread.—Yet the bread which you touch, had before been promised you; the bread which you see, had been announced to you as the bread that came down from heaven; the bread that you eat, had already been proclaimed to you as my flesh, which I was to give for the life of the world. I am come to announce that the time of parables is past, and that henceforward I shall treat you with all the unreserved familiarity of friends. I no longer speak to you in parables; I say not, that this is the *figure of my body*, bread of-itself contains nothing analogous to my flesh, and I have advanced nothing that could lead you to consider my words

as a mere parable. To assure you that, *This is my body*, and yet under this figure to conceal a meaning you could not comprehend, would be cruelly to deceive you. Believe, therefore, in my words, and rely with confidence on my love. I have loved my own, and loved them to the end : indeed what could be a stronger pledge of this love, than my giving them my flesh to eat ?

What, is it thy flesh we are about to eat ? Our senses revolt at such language ; we feel the same emotions of horror experienced by the men of Capernaum, when they heard thy divine lips announce this astonishing effort of thy love. O thou, the sweetest and most compassionate of men, canst thou propose to feed thy disciples with thy own flesh and blood ? Religion restrains us from lifting our hand against our brother ; how then shall we dare to offer so sacrilegious a violence to our God ?

You, my faithful disciples, whom I myself have initiated into this mystery, you surely cannot entertain ideas so gross and carnal. You cannot but remember the assurance I gave you, that my words were spirit and life ; what should you justly conclude from this ?—that if my mercy could devise a spiritual food so astonishing in its effects, surely I had the power to employ such means as were best adapted to the end I had in view ; that I spoke not of flesh to be divided and portioned out like that which contributes to your bodily support, but of my entire body, given to each of you without division or separation ; that the question here is not of dead

flesh separate from the blood, but of a living body, the principle of a spiritual life; that the words; *This is my body*, must necessarily be spirit and life, since they operate a true immolation, without the destruction of the victim; and that the appearances which conceal this mystery are only a veil, by which the delicacy of your feelings is consulted, at the same time that your faith is put to the test, in beholding a God communicated under elements the most familiar to man. No longer, therefore, hesitate to believe that *this is my body*, but be zealous to transmit this saving truth to ages yet unborn.

As for us, my brethren, let us renew our faith in this adorable mystery; let us command our reason to be silent; let us dispel from our minds every shadow of doubt, and prepare to draw from these truths the most salutary reflections. We reserve for the ensuing Instruction the words which the priest pronounces in consecrating the other substance of wine; let us beg of God the assistance of his grace to meditate on them before-hand with hearts undefiled with sin, and inflamed with charity.—  
Amen.

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#### SEQUEL TO THE WORDS OF CONSECRATION.

This is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you. EXODUS, xxiv. v. 8.

**I**T is no longer Moses that speaks, and the question here, my brethren, is not of a temporary cove-

nant, and a law of death. This covenant, like the former which God made with his people, is cemented with blood, but not with the blood of a mortal victim, destitute of sense and reason; it is the blood of a God, which, shed in honour of a God, fully and perfectly atones for the outrage that has been offered to a God; it is the blood of the most holy and excellent of the children of men, which, poured out for the salvation of humankind, insures them pardon, grace, happiness, and peace.

*This is my blood*; such are the words about to be addressed to you by him whom God has given us for a victim; it is from his own mouth that we are to be assured of the real presence of his blood which was shed for the remission of sins. Let us dispose ourselves to listen to the oracles about to proceed from these adorable lips, and to acknowledge them as the words of Him who has said; ‘I am come that they may have life and abound.’

The words we are about to explain, form a sequel to those which were the subject of our last instruction; because in effect they operate the same mystery, and according to the unanimous doctrine of the divines of the church, are so necessarily dependent upon each other, that the consecration is considered as invalid, unless the whole of them are pronounced. It is by virtue of these words; *This is my body*, that the bread is changed into the body of Jesus Christ, as it is by virtue of these others; *This is my blood*, that the wine is changed into the

blood of Jesus Christ. But as a body cannot be living and yet deprived of blood, and as blood can have no animation when separate from the body, theologians teach that there is, between these two words, a kind of connection which they term concomitance, whereby, through the virtue of these words ; *This is my body*, the body of Jesus Christ is united to the blood within the chalice, and through the virtue of these other words ; *This is my blood*, the blood is united to the body under the species of bread. Therefore however divided these words may appear, faith regards them as forming in the mouth of Jesus Christ who pronounces them, but one and the same act of his omnipotent power; she considers them as that single sword of the word, with which, as priest, he was to immolate himself, and as victim, to give his precious blood to flow for the remission of sins.

In explaining these words, let us follow the same order as the church prescribes in repeating them. In this second part of the consecration, she observes the same ceremonies as in the first; the priest bends over the altar, blesses the wine, and immediately after pronouncing these words, kneels in adoration, and elevates the chalice, that it may be seen and adored by all the people. I shall not go over the same ground and repeat what these ceremonies imply; it is of more importance to meditate on the words that accompany them.

The church, in some measure, prepared us for the first part of the consecration, by a recital of the

circumstances that accompanied it. She thus resumes this recital before the consecration of the chalice: *In like manner after he had supped,—that is, after having fulfilled the Jewish law, by the immolation of the Paschal lamb, and performed the last Passover with his apostles, in order that they figure might be brought nearer to the reality, and that they might the more sensibly feel the value of the victim which he substituted in the place of the ancient holocausts. It is at the moment that their mouths are purpled with the blood of an ineffectual victim, that he takes this excellent chalice into his holy and venerable hands, to fill it with the blood of the adorable and universal victim: a chalice, well prefigured by that of which the prophet says; ‘I will take the chalice of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord:’—a chalice, more excellent still than that which enebriated the prophet to such a holy excess, that he forgot all his sorrows. This is truly a chalice of benediction, not only because Jesus Christ in taking it, gives thanks and blesses it; but because a spirit of fervour and purity, a spirit of consolation and peace, a spirit of charity and love, is there shed forth upon the face of the whole Christian world.*

Let us dwell for a moment on this circumstance. What a tender and affecting spectacle to behold Jesus Christ with the chalice in his hands, in the attitude of filling it with his precious blood! How well, in this instance, does he fulfil the functions of an angel of peace, of a minister of the new cove-

nant! St John, in his Apocalypse, gives a fearful description of those ministering angels, whom the Almighty commissions to pour forth the cup of his wrath on the guilty nations of the earth. Here the Ancient of days, places the cup of mercy in the hands of his well-beloved Son, the angel of his counsel, to pour it on sinful man, and purify him from every stain of sin. But it becomes a subject of affliction, to see that this chalice of benediction becomes to many who partake thereof, a mortal beverage; and that, by the malice of the wicked, it is too often converted into a cup of wrath and malediction against the sacrilegious and profane. Struck with this melancholy truth, the great St Chrysostom exclaims: ‘When you hear Jesus Christ inviting you to take this chalice and drink of these, let no one whose soul is a slave to avarice—let no one whose conscience is defiled by any impure affection,—let no Judas dare approach it!’ *Take and drink ye all of this*; you, whose lively grief, sincere repentance, and abundant tears, have effaced the stains of sin; you, whom a heart of compunction, a soul of innocence, and a conscience of purity, entitle to a place in the number of the true disciples of Jesus Christ; you, who show yourselves faithful in the practice of his law, zealous in bearing his cross, and filled with a holy hunger and thirst after justice; you, above all, who becoming victims with him, sacrifice to him your darling inclinations and passions, and offer him your goods in the person of the poor, approach, take this cha-



lice with confidence, and rejoice to hear the abundant blessings it contains. It is *the blood of the new and eternal testament*, which reconciles an offended Father to his rebellious children, atones for the accumulated outrages of successive ages, effaces sins of the deepest dye, and conciliates sinners of every age and condition: this blood of the true Pascal lamb, which, as it tinges your lips, will be a signal to the destroying angel to keep a respectful distance; this blood prefigured by that of the heifer, whose sprinkling had the virtue to purify the conscience from dead works; this blood, of which that was a figure, which the high-priest carried once a year into the Holy of Holies, is perpetually offered by Jesus Christ, and continually presented to God in our behalf in the sanctuary of his glory; this blood, which cries to heaven more loudly than that of Abel, but which cries in accents of mercy and forgiveness; which is infinitely more effective than the whole united victims that were offered in the old law, and which cements not a temporary alliance made by the ministry of men to a solitary nation, but that eternal covenant, which the Almighty contracts by the ministry of his Son with all the nations of the earth.

Methinks I hear the Saviour thus addressing his disciples: Yet a few short hours, and this blood which is now mystically shed for you, shall be poured forth in a bloody and visible manner; such is my ardour to shed it, that I have anticipated the sacrifice of the cross, and devised this method of

imparting it to your souls. It is for you, my beloved disciples, that this blood is to flow. True it is that the jealousy of my enemies is the apparent, but not the principal cause. The accusations which they are inventing to destroy me, the perfidy of the disciple who is to betray me, the baseness of the judge who is to consent to my condemnation, together with the cruelty that instigates my executioners, are but so many instruments of which my inventive charity avails itself to testify the ardour of my love. Flowing from a source that is immense and inexhaustible, this charity is also immeasurable in its effects: my charity makes no distinction between Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian; *it shall be shed for all to the remission of sins.* If the superabundance of my merits and my sacrifice be not applied to all, the fault cannot attach to any thing circumscribed in my mercy; the child of perdition can impute his ruin to nothing but the consequences of his sins. Presume not, therefore, to sound with dangerous curiosity the depths of my mercy; adore in silence the severity with which it visits those who wilfully rush to their destruction; prevent the rigours thereof by a faithful application to this mystery of love. It is *for the remission of sins* that I have established this sacrifice, and it is in consideration of your sins being daily renewed, that it shall be daily offered as a *means of expiation.*

The prophets who invited the Israelites to repentance, admonished them to bend their heads to

the ground, the better by such a posture to express the deep humiliation which a view of their iniquities inspired. I should wish in this part of the Mass to engage you to imitate their example. Yes, it is in the attitude of humble prostration, that we should adore this mystery of a God immolated for sin. It is at the altar that Jesus Christ is attentive to our necessities, it is there that he prepares the remedies for the wounds of our souls. Spare, he exclaims, spare thy people, O Lord ! no longer treasure up against them those feelings of indignation, however justly merited on their part ; or if thy anger against sin be implacable, strike here upon a victim that is worthy of thy notice.

In effect, the Almighty does strike this adorable victim ; and this sacrifice, notwithstanding the splendour of the ceremonials, and the piety and veneration displayed by those Christians who assist thereat, is always a sacrifice of expiation and suffering on the part of Jesus Christ : not indeed of that external suffering which is incompatible with the state of glory and felicity in which his resurrection has placed him, but of a suffering representative, in some degree, of the indignities which he experienced in his passion. On our altars, as heretofore on the altar of the cross, Jesus Christ is still a victim to the hypocrisy of wicked priests, to the perfidy of false disciples, to the neglect and ingratitude of those whom he has loaded with his favours, to the contempt and raillery of those who surround his altar ; these very sins,

which so cruelly renew the sad scenes of his passion, are the object of this sacrifice.

The silence he maintains on the altar, similar to what he persevered in on the cross, is intended to inspire with shame and repentance even those who offer him these indignities: the object of the prayers he there addresses to his Father, is to obtain their conversion and return to the paths of grace; and equally prodigal of his blood here as on Mount Calvary, he is solicitous that all who encompass his altar should find life and salvation, peace of soul, a remedy for their wounds, and the remission of their sins.

Let us terminate these Instructions on the solemn act of Consecration, by a few short observations on the words that conclude it: *Do this in remembrance of me*—bring to this sacred action the same dispositions, the same sentiments that actuated me in instituting it. An offended God to whom atonement must be made, the reign of sin which must be destroyed, the kingdom of God which must be established upon the ruins of the prince of darkness, such is the object of my mission, such the end of my sacrifice, and at the same time the sum and substance of your obligations. But effectually to do this action in remembrance of me, it will not be sufficient merely to assist at this oblation, or to offer and participate therein; you must, moreover, be penetrated with a hatred for sin, with a desire to efface and expiate it by repentance; such sentiments alone can excite in your

hearts that love of the cross, that spirit of self-denial and detachment for all things earthly which conducted me to the altar. To the memory of my sacrifice, you must associate the idea of my obedience, by your submission to my law ; of my patience, by the unshaken firmness of your minds amidst the ills of life ; of my meekness, by your gentle and unassuming deportment to your fellow-men ; of my tender charity, by your solicitude to relieve the distressed and comfort the afflicted. Imitate my example in these respects, and you may then say with just confidence, that you have done this *in remembrance of me*. Thus will your life, like mine, become a perpetual sacrifice ; thus will my oblation animate all your good works with that true spirit which alone is capable of stamping them with their true value, and of rendering them available to everlasting life. Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER ‘ UNDE ET MEMORES.’

“ Be mindful of thy word to thy servant, in which thou hast given him hope.”—PSAL. cxviii. v. 49.

**I**T strikes me, my brethren, that this expression of the prophet is calculated to convey a just idea of the sentiments with which the words of consecration we have just explained, ought to inspire us. They are truly the words of the Lord by excellence, since they were pronounced on so memorable an occasion, and by him to whom all domi-

nion has been given in heaven, on earth and in hell. They are truly addressed to his servants, since he has strictly enjoined us to repeat them after him. They are words of hope and life, because the object of the mystery they have operated, is to render life to those whom sin has reduced to a state of death, and to animate the confidence of those whom the view of their sins might overwhelm with despair. We are, therefore, authorized to repeat the words of the psalmist, which we have just quoted; we have complied with thy injunctions, O Lord, in fulfilling what thou hast commanded to be done in remembrance of thee; we have assisted with religious awe at the mystery which thy words have operated. Suffer these words to incline thee to be favourable to thy servants, and let not the hopes we place in thee be vain and unfounded. These reflections naturally conduct us from the Consecration to the prayers that follow it. Whatever has preceded this holy action, may be regarded as a preparation, let us, therefore, consider what follows as an application of the fruits of this mystery.

The church terminated the Consecration by these words of Jesus Christ; *Do this in remembrance of me*; the commencement of the following prayer shows the same intimate connection between the different parts of the Canon, which we have more than once had occasion to notice. The priest repeats; ‘*Wherefore, O Lord, we thy servants, as also thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed*

passion of the same Christ thy Son our Lord, his resurrection and admirable ascension into heaven, offer unto thy most excellent Majesty, of thy gifts bestowed upon us, a pure Host, a holy Host, an unspotted Host, the hallowed bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation.'

The first reflection that occurs on the perusal of this prayer, is that the church makes an obvious distinction between *the servants* of the Almighty, and his *holy people*; for though the victim is offered for all, it is more especially so for those who surround his altar in worthy dispositions. They, in some degree, exercise the same ministry with the priest, who himself fulfils but one and the same office with Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the whole plenitude of the priesthood: so that the more immediate application of this mystery is made to him that officiates, and to those who actually offer by his hands. Hence it follows, that of all exercises of piety, an assiduous attendance at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, even on days that the church has not enjoined it as a matter of duty, must be the most salutary; that it is preferable to all the prayers we can offer in the interior of our closet, because in this action we become, in some measure, the representatives of the whole church, to offer in her name, and to draw down upon her the graces that flow from this holy sacrifice.

But if the church gives a just preference to those whom obedience and devotion conduct to the altar, still she is not unmindful of such as are de-

prived of it either through distance of place, indispensable duties, or painful infirmities : she does not forget even those whom an affected negligence, or culpable indifference keep at a distance from the altar, they are all comprehended under the term, *thy holy people*. What a subject of consolation for such as suffer the rigours and privations of servitude, or are confined at home by painful and lingering infirmities, to reflect that they are all present in the assembly of the faithful ; that the church is alive to their necessities, and that the distance which separates them exteriorly from this victim of love, is incapable of dissolving a union which charity has cemented ! Yes, they truly belong to this holy family, and the more they resemble their divine Master by patience under labours and sufferings, the more firmly are these bonds of union cemented.

The second reflection that offers itself is, that though the sacrifice of the Mass is more particularly designed to recal the memory of the passion of Jesus Christ, yet the church makes mention also in this prayer of the mysteries of the resurrection and ascension, because they bear an essential relation to his passion. Thus we communicate in this sacrifice with Jesus Christ as dead, who by his death has subverted the dominion of the grave ; limited our death to time, which would otherwise have been eternal ; and rendered what was heretofore the wages of sin, the passage to a life that shall never end. We communicate with the risen



Jesus, whose resurrection is the model and principle of ours ; who in rising triumphant from the tomb, has added fervour to our faith, and energy to our hope ; and who, by retaining in this sacrifice all the qualities of a glorified body, has transmitted to our vile bodies the happy privilege of being transformed into his. We communicate with Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and by this action we, in some measure, ascend with him thither, and soar in spirit to the happy mansion which he has assigned us ; so that even now we may consider ourselves as citizens of heaven, and learn to regard this earth as a place of exile, and our sojournment here below as a wearisome pilgrimage to our true home under happier skies. Is it possible for a Christian to be so constantly reminded of these saving mysteries, and yet so obstinately to persevere in the love of sensible things ? What, do we offer this sacrifice in memory of a crucified Jesus, and yet has not the spirit of religion sufficient influence on our hearts to inspire us with a spirit of penance and self-denial ! Can we be so fatally negligent, as scarcely ever to practise that renunciation of our own wills, that mortification of the mind and the senses, which alone can render us conformable to Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification !

By assisting at this holy oblation, we participate in his resurrection ; but this participation does not merely consist in a few barren prayers, which neither render us more attentive to avoid dead

works, nor more zealous to walk in the newness of life. Jesus Christ is risen to die no more, and we go on heedless of the mortal blows which the enemy is aiming at our salvation.

In fine, in the midst of this oblation we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ dying upon the cross; can our hearts, therefore, be still grovelling amidst the things of earth, enslaved to our inordinate desires, yielding without resistance to the voice of flesh and blood, and destitute of zeal for the good things of eternity? At the humbling view of all these weaknesses, dare we stile ourselves *the servants* of God: dare we rank ourselves in the number of his children; are we not afraid of assuming the title of *his holy people*, and of boasting that we are *mindful*—that we retain a grateful remembrance of these three great mysteries! Ah, let us rather deplore our criminal neglect, and say in a spirit of contrition and humility; O Lord, we tremble in offering this sacrifice to *thy adorable Majesty*; we should feel infinitely embarrassed what to offer, hadst not thou thyself supplied us with these *gifts and presents*: no longer regard our innumerable offences, our criminal revolts, our rebellious obstinacy, but look upon this *pure Host*:—this victim that never knew sin except to bear its punishment; that never felt the corruption of our nature, except to fall beneath the weight of its malignity. May his sacrifice purify our souls from every disorderly affection, from every desire repugnant to thy law; may we become holy by our

union to a *victim that is holy*. And though we cannot pretend to that essential and perfect purity, which has never known the stain of sin, grant that, at least, we may participate in the victim who possesses the germ of all purity, because he is an *unspotted Host*: grant that henceforward we may never relish the fruits of iniquity—those fruits that have so often been productive of death, and would be so still, if like the tree of life planted of old in the terrestrial paradise, thou hadst not placed in the midst of thy church the *holy bread of eternal life*. It is from this garden that thy mercy commands, not the fertilizing stream, but thine own precious blood to flow, which is at once the life and the refreshment of our souls. Grant us, therefore, to partake of this *chalice of salvation* which allays the thirst of the soul, and whose water is to spring up unto life eternal.

In pronouncing the last words of this prayer, the priest at the mention of each attribute signs the victim with the sign of the cross: it may be well to admonish you, that though these signs of the cross, like those employed before the Consecration, imply that this sacrifice is a representation of the passion, yet they have not the same object. It is not thereby intended to bless the offering, since that is already essentially hallowed by its conversion into the body and blood of Christ; it is done with a view to remind the priest and his assistants, that hereby the sacrifice of the cross is renewed,

not only as to its substance, but also as to its effects.

On the cross, a *pure Host* is offered to the God of purity; a *holy Host* to the God of holiness; an *unspotted Host* to a God who is the enemy and avenger of sin; the *holy bread of eternal life*, to him who is its principle, the *chalice of everlasting salvation* to him who is its end. The same objects are presented to our minds when the priest repeats these signs of the cross. They still represent Jesus Christ crucified, not merely in a figurative, but in a real manner: therefore I need no longer transport myself in a spirit to Mount Calvary, to become a partaker of this sacrifice; the altar becomes a sacred Calvary, where the justice of God claims an adequate reparation, where the submission of the Son makes this full reparation to his eternal Father, where the victim is slain by the ministry of the priest, and consumed by the flames of charity. It is here, as on Mount Calvary, that it can be justly said of him; ‘He is offered, because he so wills it;’ he offers himself to the Lord a pure and unspotted victim. Would to God I could exclaim with the same zeal and truth as the apostle; ‘With Christ I am fastened to the cross!’ I am united to this *pure Host*, if not by an inviolate purity, at least by a perfect detestation of sin; to this *holy Host*, if not by a consummate justice, at least by a sincere desire to watch over the interests of the flock that he has entrusted to my care; to this *unspotted Host*, if not by a total exemption

from weakness and sin, at least by a hearty desire of atoning for it by penance. I am united to *this bread of life*, if not by a total renunciation of terrestrial and transitory objects, at least by an interior detachment from all that is perishable, and by a fond anticipation of the good things to be derived from this bread of eternal life. In fine, I partake of *this chalice of everlasting salvation*, if not by a love of humiliations and sufferings as ardent as his, at least by a perfect submission to his holy will, an entire resignation to his all-wise decrees, and an unshaken hope that the bitter chalice of his justice, which I am constrained to taste here below, will be perfectly sweetened by the consolations mingled for me in this *chalice of everlasting salvation*. Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER ‘ SUPRA QUÆ PROPITIO AC SERENO  
VULTU.’

“ Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisadec.”  
PSAL. cix. v. 4.

**T**HE object of the royal prophet in these words, is not to point out the origin, or describe the model of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We know, my brethren, that Melchisadec derived the sanctity of his character, and his consecration to the priestly office, from God alone, and that the elements he employed in his sacrifice, were only so far holy

and acceptable to the Lord, as they had from all eternity been chosen by the wisdom of the Father to form the matter of that only true sacrifice which was to be offered him by his son. It must be allowed that the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisadec, were far superior to the other sacrifices of the Jewish law, but when compared to that offered by Jesus Christ, they are as mere figures and shadows to the reality.

The eulogium which the church bestows upon the sacrifices of these patriarchs in the prayer which forms the subject of the present Instruction, cannot tend to distract our attention, weaken our veneration, or diminish our confidence in that of Jesus Christ ; on the contrary, it will teach us to seek in the sacrifice of our altars, for that eminence and perfection which were deemed praiseworthy in the offerings of these illustrious men. The subject considered in this point of view will suggest many useful reflections.

Of all the sacrifices which prefigured that of the Son of God, it is certain that there were none worthy of the gracious acceptance of the Almighty ; yet we observe some among the rest to which he was pleased to give a decided preference, because both the disposition of the offerers, and the matter of the sacrifice represented in a more striking degree that oblation which himself had chosen from all eternity : and amongst the most remarkable we may, with the church, reckon those of Abel, Abraham and Melchisadec, which she particularly names

in this prayer. She intreats the Almighty ; That he would vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance, and to accept this offering, as he was graciously pleased to accept the gifts of his servants, who were so highly recommended by their piety: nay, though these oblations were made previous to the establishment of the new law, she hesitates not to dignify them with the titles of a *holy sacrifice, an unspotted victim*. But how can she attribute these high and noble qualities to offerings that were abolished and superceded by the institution of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Let us clear up this apparent difficulty, by referring these different figures to the reality whence they derive all their value and efficacy.

The sacrifice of Abel was holy, as being offered by a just man, who had already been apprised of the misery of his fallen state, and of the resources prepared for him by the mercy of Jesus Christ. He offers the firstlings of his fold, and offers them with a simple, upright, and sincere heart:—a striking figure of the true Lamb, which, laden with the sins of the world, was one day to be dragged to the place of sacrifice, without uttering the least complaint, or offering the slightest resistance. The sacrifice offered by Abel was preparatory to that, which he was shortly to offer in person, under the murderous hand of his brother Cain; in this, after a manner still more striking, he represents Jesus Christ our brother, who was betrayed by an apostate disciple, and sacrificed to the jealousy

of the Pharisees. Abel merits the title of a servant of God, since, so long before the propagation of the gospel, he traced out in his conduct its sublime morality. Meek and humble of heart, patient under injuries, and the adorer of his God in spirit and truth, he is rightly entitled to the character of just, and shares by anticipation in a portion of his justice, who was hereafter to visit mankind, and establish upon earth the reign of eternal justice.

The sacrifice of Abraham is also holy: it was ordained by the express command of God, and in the circumstances attending it, this patriarch presents a forcible image of the eternal Father, who has so far loved us, as to give his only begotten Son for our ransom. He exhibits an edifying spectacle of that perfect obedience, which submits without reasoning, and complies without a murmur; of that filial confidence, which relies more securely upon the tenderness of a father who commands the sacrifice, than upon the feeble efforts of human prudence, to elude a painful submission; of that lively faith, which rejects every deceitful suggestion, every ungrounded fear, and rests unwavering upon the certainty of those promises that are to render him the patriarch of a future race, of the faithful inheritance of his God. His submission, his courage, and his faith shall stand to the very end of ages as a powerful lesson to the docile Christian, and a lasting reproach to the hardened heart. These qualities have merited for this great man the name



of the father of believers, because, by showing his readiness to sacrifice what was dearest to his heart, and that in opposition to the voice of nature, the suggestions of reason, and the yearnings of paternal tenderness, he believed against belief, he hoped against hope itself.

The sacrifice of Melchisadec is also holy ; it was the offspring of gratitude, and, in this respect, it presents a striking image of the great Eucharistic sacrifice, whose very name implies *thanksgiving*. As at the altar of the new covenant, so in the present instance we behold one who unites the two-fold character of priest and king, makes an oblation of bread and wine in thanksgiving for an important victory, and by this sacrifice draws down most abundant benedictions upon Abraham and his whole posterity. Like Jesus Christ, Melchisadec in this circumstance fulfils the function of mediator between God and man ; in some respects he also bears a resemblance to the Divinity, inasmuch as his generation, like that of the eternal Word, is ineffable. He is also connected with our humanity, in quality of King of Salem ; under this character he is a figure of the true Emanuel, who, under the two-fold quality of priest and king, is come to insure us the victory over sin, to purify and bless us by the oblation of bread converted into his body, and of wine into his blood.

The church, therefore, reminds us of these three mysteries, when in the present prayer she entreats the Almighty to accept the sacrifice that she offers

by the hands of the priest, as he was graciously pleased to accept those of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisadec. As if she had said: Thou hast been pleased to impart a value to the offering of Abel—although he merely presented the firstlings of his fold; to the sacrifice of Abraham—though in the person of his son he only offered a mortal victim; to the oblation of Melchisadec—though his hands were filled with nothing but senseless and inanimate elements: thou hast been pleased to permit these gifts to be called a holy sacrifice, an unspotted victim, because they hold the place of a more holy Host, and a more excellent sacrifice. What an inexhaustible source of benedictions is opened for us at the moment we behold Thee in the hands of thy ministers—when we behold, not the blood of unavailing animals, but the blood of the new covenant; not the offspring of a just man, but he who is justice and sanctity in its very essence—thine own eternal Son; not the material bread destined for our bodily support, but the food of the elect, that bread which came down from heaven, and which is the food of thine angels; not the wine prepared by the hand of man, and intended to impart a corporal and temporary strength, but that wine which produces purity, and becomes the true consolation of man in his journey through this vale of tears and afflictions; that wine which thou hast promised thine Elect that they shall taste anew in thy kingdom. Such is the *holy sacrifice*,

the *unspotted victim* which alone is the source of every benediction.

Still, my brethren, let not the just preference which the church gives to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, make us lose sight of the three great men who are commemorated in this prayer, since the sacrifice they offered, and the dispositions they brought to this holy action, are so many examples which this tender mother holds out for our imitation. With Abel let us bring to the altar a heart of purity, a soul of innocence and simplicity, a uniform sweetness of disposition, which no intercourse with the wicked shall be able to alter. With him let us offer the first fruits of all we possess :— let the young sacrifice their early inclinations, the first affections of their hearts, the first thoughts and actions of each day. There are first fruits of every age, and every situation of life. The rich offer the first fruits of their riches, when, retrenching luxury and superfluity, they devote that superabundance of the things of this world to the service of the poor, which sinners lavish in their pleasures and riotous extravagance. The afflicted Christian offers his first fruits, when he submits his will to the just appointments of heaven, when he imposes silence on the rebellious voice of nature, and prefers a life of suffering in the service of Jesus Christ, to a life of gait and pleasure in the society of the wicked. With Abraham, let us offer our only son : that is—the fondest affections, the most darling inclinations of our hearts : can we hesitate to

comply, when the law of God demands the sacrifice? Let us not reason upon the nature of the precept, when enjoined by so unerring an authority. The characteristic virtues of this great man consisted in submission, courage and faith; let us, therefore, show ourselves children of Abraham, and inheritors of the promise made to him, by an invincible patience, an active faith, and a perfect docility. Such are the important lessons that the church proposes in calling our attention to these three just men of the Old Testament: but that we may never lose sight of Jesus Christ, who is the only object of our homage and our confidence in this oblation, let us consider him as the true Abel, the faithful Abraham, and the real Melchisedec; let us unite ourselves to his sacrifice, which comprises all the characteristics, all the blessings and advantages we have admired in the former. This is truly an offering of the first fruits, since he is the Lamb immolated from the foundation of the world, the First-born of the children of men, the Chief of the predestinated, and the model of the true resurrection. He is the favoured of God's chosen flock, the Lamb without spot, who, though charged with the iniquities of a sinful world, never knew the stain of sin. He bears the precious fleece, prefigured by that of Gideon, which alone imbibed the dews of grace, while the rest of the earth lay barren and parched with drought; he alone remained untouched amidst that deluge of iniquity which swallowed up every creature: this

must surely be the oblation of which we read in the book of Genesis, that it was acceptable to the Almighty.

In Jesus Christ we behold the true Abraham, the real father of all true-born believers, who in a spirit of obedience still more wonderful than that of the patriarch, quitted not only his native country, but the eternal abode of his glory : who came, not into a strange land, but unto his own, by whom he was treated as a stranger. It is in him that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed ; and yet on him falls the whole weight of the divine indignation. He is commanded to ascend the mountain of Calvary, laden with the wood of his sacrifice. Less favoured than Abraham, no angel comes to announce to him the rigorous dispensations of his eternal Father ; he drains the cup of wrath over to the very lees ; encircled in thorns, his head, like that of the victim which Abraham beheld in the thicket, is devoted to anathema ; he is to be substituted in place of all the victims that preceded him, and is to impart all their value to such as the Almighty shall require in ages yet to come.

May we with the angel of the Lord address this true Abraham ; and exclaim : Now I know that thou fearest God. It is from thee alone that we can derive that salutary fear, which is the beginning of wisdom. Thou hast not spared thine own life, in order to give thy eternal Father the strongest test of thy obedience, and to us thy servants

the most eloquent lesson of docility and submission.

In fine, let us admire this true Melchisadec, whose generation, according to the prophet, no one can recount, whose priest-hood had no other origin than eternity, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end; who though unacknowledged by the earthly Jerusalem as the King of glory, is not less on that account the Ruler of nations, the Prince of peace, the Sovereign of earth and heaven, in whose hands are the bread of life and the chalice of salvation; who alone had the power to bless them, by rendering thanks to his Father, and who in blessing them has shed the most abundant graces upon our souls.

Prostrate before his altar, we will repeat these words of the royal prophet, which the church puts so often in our mouths: 'The Lord hath sworn, that he will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisadec.' Yes, the Lord hath solemnly sworn it, nothing can alter the decrees of the eternal Wisdom; he hath spoken, and we believe from our hearts what our lips profess: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisadec. It is by thee that every sacrifice, vow, and prayer, shall be offered even to the consummation of ages; it is through thee that the oblation of my mind and my heart, of my whole being and all that I possess, derive their whole value and efficacy; it is in thee that we find the model and rule of all our sacrifices, and it is by thee

that the fruit, even of the smallest of our offerings, shall be applied to our souls. Thou hast thyself formed us into an order of priests and kings; O grant that we may never disgrace those august titles; grant that we may support the dignity of these pretensions by frequent victories over our passions, and by the constant sacrifice of our own will. Grant, that faithful to this two-fold ministry, we may never cease to discharge its functions with becoming zeal, and be rendered worthy of prolonging them for endless ages in the temple of thy glory. Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER 'SUPPLICES TE ROGAMUS.'

For Jesus is not entered into the sanctuaries made with hands, but into heaven itself, that he may now appear in the presence of God for us.—HEB. chap. ix 24.

**M**y brethren, how shall I presume to enter on the explication of a prayer, which the most learned authors, the most holy pontiffs, and the most enlightened doctors of the church, have termed ineffable; whose awful and mysterious import but few have ventured to explore, and which all those who have meditated thereon with faith, have considered as beyond all explanation? If I venture to speak on the present subject, it is not under the idea of throwing any new light thereon, but merely to avail myself of the wisdom of so many eminent

men, in order to inspire those who listen to me with the profound attention which this sacred prayer demands.

We must not forget that all the prayers of the canon are intimately connected with the words of consecration ; this, in particular, seems more immediately intended as a continuation of that most august mystery. It ought, therefore, to be pronounced with religious awe, and meditated on with profound veneration ; let us endeavour to excite these sentiments in our hearts, by attentively considering the particular expressions that compose it.

All the other prayers of the canon, with the exception of the words of consecration, are pronounced by the priest in an upright posture, and with elevated hands ; but in pronouncing these, as at the sacramental words, he bends over the altar, joins his hands, and, in certain religious orders, crosses them upon his breast : a posture which implies that, as far as the action of the sacrifice will permit, the minister prostrates himself before the majesty of God. It is accompanied by three signs of the cross, each of which has its particular application, while the purpose and signification of each may best be seen in the terms that precede and follow it.

‘ We most humbly beseech thee, Almighty God,’ says the priest, ‘ that thou wilt command these things to be carried by the hands of thy holy angels to thy altar on high, in the sight of thy Divine Majesty ; that as many as shall partake of the



most sacred body and blood of thy Son at this altar, may be filled with every heavenly grace and blessing: 'Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.'

*We most humbly beseech thee*: such is the expression of humility which the church puts in the mouth of her minister, after having prescribed the posture most suited to these words. In compliance with the spirit of the church, both the priest and people ought to accompany them with sentiments of an humble confidence. It is to *an Almighty God* that they are addressed; but why not rather to a beneficent God, to a patient God, to a God of indulgence and mercy? The reason, according to the remark of a pious author, is, that an effort of his power is as necessary in this instance, as a display of his mercy; since it requires the whole force of his almighty arm to effect an union between earth and heaven, between man the sinner, and God the holy. For the same reason, the usual terms, grant, vouchsafe, or permit, are no longer employed; but the word, *command*, is substituted in their place. To operate so great a miracle, nothing less is required than that absolute and efficacious decree by which nonentity was summoned into existence, by which 'he spoke, and all things were made; he commanded, and all things were created.' This is that new creation of which it was said, that 'it should renew the face of the earth.'

*Command these gifts*, unworthy as they were, a few moments since, of being received into heaven, since before the change that is now operated, they

were mere vile and perishable elements ; but now that they are become, by virtue of thy divine word, the body and blood of a God, *command them to be carried by the hands of thy holy angel to thy altar on high.* Yes, in spite of its consecration, this earthly and material altar is unworthy to bear gifts of so hallowed and spiritual a nature ; though sanctified by the holy unction, the hands of the priest are not sufficiently pure to offer them, and our hearts, however animated by charity and inflamed with the holiest desires, are still incapable of soaring to this altar on high. Thou alone, O Lord, canst elevate our hearts thither, by uniting them to thy sacrifice ; for who, says one of thy prophets, who shall dare to approach thy tabernacle, and abide on thy holy mountain ? Who can flatter himself that he possesses that innocence, that purity of heart, which alone can give him the confidence to approach thee ? Whilst we remain prostrate at the foot of this visible altar, oh may thy holy angel perform, in our regard, the function of high priest, to offer the host of propitiation on thy invisible altar on high ! But what angel, O my God, wilt thou employ on so important a ministry ? They are all messengers, prompt to execute thy commands, but are not all invested with the same powers. Wilt thou employ that angel so formidable to the powers of hell, who, strong in the might of thy arm, once hurled from heaven the rebellious spirits ? Wilt thou charge with this consoling ministry, the beneficent angel, who was, in thy name,

the guide of Tobias, and the consolation of his afflicted family? Wilt thou entrust this august function to him who was chosen to announce to Mary the mystery of man's redemption? Ah! however admirable and holy these celestial intelligences, they all fall prostrate at the foot of thy altar; they all tremble at the presence of the Lamb that was slain, and are filled with awe at the idea of the ministry that is exercised by thy priests. No, none of these dare undertake the task—it is the angel of the great council, it is Jesus Christ himself who undertakes to present the oblation. By his manhood he ranks a little below the angels, it is therefore just that he should resume the authority which his divine nature gives him over these his ministering spirits, and that in the midst of their benedictions and profound adorations he should, by this sacrifice, render to thy divine Majesty the honour, praise, and glory that are so justly due. Whilst our High Priest, our Mediator, and our Victim, fulfils so many interesting and august functions, at the right hand of thy glory, how consoling the thought that we are admitted to communicate therein at this visible altar, which forms but one and the same with thy holy altar above. The wall of separation is destroyed; thou art truly with us here below, and we already anticipate thy presence as it shall be enjoyed in heaven; our unworthiness, and the baseness of our extraction, have lost every thing that rendered them revolting in thy sight, whilst thy greatness and majesty are no

longer too dazzling and oppressive for our nature. Ever present before thee, thy Son conceals the imperfections of our humanity; placed between us, the offspring of corruption, and thee, who art the Sun of Justice, he at the same time casts our defects in the shade, and softens the rays of thy overwhelming glory. It is, therefore, with confidence that we approach to partake of the oblation offered on this holy altar; some by an actual communion of the body and blood of Christ; others, by a union of their hearts and minds to this sacrifice: these by a sincere contrition for their faults; those by the fervour of their prayers: all, by the most lively confidence in thy mercy.

My brethren, let us pay particular attention to that part of the present prayer which more immediately regards us, and learn what the church means by calling us to partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We actually partake thereof in the holy communion, which is, in some degree, the consummation of the sacrifice; but the church, who excludes none from this participation, not even those whom their sins keep at a distance from the altar, teaches us by the words of this prayer, that there is a kind of communion compatible with the situation of every Christian who assists at the holy sacrifice. Thus, while the priest participates therein by offering, and the well-disposed Christian by receiving, the sinner also partakes thereof, by acknowledging his faults, accusing himself of his disorders, and detesting his infidelities; by solicit-

ing his conversion, and making sincere resolutions against a future relapse; the afflicted Christian participates therein, by uniting his sufferings to those of Jesus Christ expiring in the midst of torments, by uniting his will to that of the Son of God, who voluntarily accepted the cup of bitterness presented him by his Eternal Father. What are we to understand by those signs of the cross which the priest makes successively over the body and blood of Christ, and then over himself? What, but that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same with that of the cross, and contains its whole value and efficacy; that it is for us alone that Christ charged himself with the weight of the cross; that he did this for our example, desirous that we also should take up our cross and follow him; that it is on this condition alone, his sacrifice can become, according to the prayer of the church, the source of every heavenly grace and benediction.

And who is to confer these benedictions upon us? My brethren, I here figure to myself the mysterious ladder that Jacob saw in a vision when returning to his country, on which angels were continually ascending and descending from earth to heaven. After this the patriarch beheld an apparition still more mysterious: an angel of the Lord descends and wrestles with him, yields him the victory, nor is allowed to depart till he has given the holy man his blessing. How many mysteries in this single circumstance! how well does this figure

appear calculated to make us enter into the spirit of the present prayer!

We have seen the angel of the Lord ascending to the altar in heaven, to present the host of propitiation; we now behold him descending towards earth to bring those graces and benedictions that are the fruit of this sacrifice. He also comes down to contend with us, by declaring war against our passions, those fatal obstacles to the precious effects of this sacrifice; but if he contends with us, it is for our welfare and advantage, and like Jacob it is that we may receive his blessing. To render the comparison perfect, let us exclaim with the patriarch; O Lord, leave us not till we have received thy blessing!—that is, we will not depart from thy altar, till we have laid open all our necessities, persuaded that there is not one but can be remedied by virtue of this oblation.

Observe, that the church, who admits nothing superfluous into the prayers of the holy sacrifice, gives us to understand that the benedictions of heaven are so many graces, since they are entirely unmerited on our part, and that every grace is in its turn a real benediction. In these terms, therefore, the church directly includes all the graces we can solicit through the merits of this sacrifice. I seem to behold her thus addressing those countless multitudes of the faithful who surround the altars of the whole Christian world: However varied your necessities, however multiplied your evils, how deeply soever you be sunk in misery, approach

with confidence, be not apprehensive lest your demands should exceed the bounds of moderation, this sacrifice is more than adequate to their fullest extent : be rather fearful lest any deficiency of faith and confidence on your part, should stop the course of these graces and benedictions. If you are sinners, solicit your conversion—the only object for which this blood was shed, was the remission of sins ; if you are just, pray for perseverance in justice—this is the blood of the eternal covenant which God has been pleased to make with you ; if afflicted, fly here for relief—this chalice contains the unction and the sweetness of every consolation ; if tempted, pray for strength—this sacrifice is the pledge of all our victories ; if persecuted, entreat for patience—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at once holds out the example, and enforces the practice of this virtue ; if poor, solicit relief to soften the rigours of poverty—this sacrifice is offered by a God, who, during his abode on earth, led a life of continual poverty, and has insured you a claim to the riches of his grace ; in fine, if you are troubled in mind, pray for the peace of God, of which this sacrifice is the surety and the source.

My brethren, in presenting you with these different explanations, I have adhered to what the Fathers and most enlightened Doctors of the church have taught on this subject ; but to omit nothing that may afford instruction on an object of such importance, I here subjoin the reflections of a judicious author. It requires no strained explication

to refer the following words, as we have done, to Jesus Christ ; *command these things to be carried by the hands of thy holy angel to thy altar on high.* Yet this explanation, analogous as it is to the principles of our belief, does not exclude a more literal interpretation, which will be found well adapted to strengthen our faith.

St Chrysostom and others of the Fathers assure us, that the angels assist with us at the adorable sacrifice : and, would to God, that we were always the imitators of their fervour, recollection, and profound adoration ! The function of these holy angels is the same as that formerly exercised by the angel Raphael in the case of Tobias, where he says : It is I who present your prayers, vows, and sacrifices to the Lord. Yes, whilst Jesus Christ offers in person to his eternal Father, the gifts consecrated by the real presence of his body and blood, the choirs of angels are employed in receiving the prayers and vows of the faithful, to present them through Jesus Christ to their God and ours. Nothing, therefore, can be more proper to strengthen our faith, and animate our piety, than the consideration that we offer the tribute of our homage in presence of the angels of God ; that the guardian angels of this holy temple, and my good angel in particular, are employed in receiving my prayers and oblations, to bear them to the throne of the Eternal. How important is it, therefore, that these prayers should proceed from the heart, and be accompanied by a spirit of recollec-



tion, that these vows should be worthy of the God to whom they are addressed, of the sacrifice to which they are united, of the graces they are destined to obtain, and of the blessed spirits who are charged with the office of presenting them ! How much is it to be feared, lest grieved at our continual distractions, our wilful indifference, our habitual coldness and langour in these holy exercises, these celestial intelligences should reject our supplications as unworthy of the God to whom we pretend to address them ! Penetrated with this truth, I should never approach the altar of the Lord, without having previously endeavoured to prepare my heart ; to purify it by contrition from every affection for sin ; to entreat the spirit of God to fill my soul with that salutary compunction, which alone can elevate my soul to the altar on high, there to render to my God that homage which commences in time, and shall be prolonged throughout eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE MEMENTO OF THE DEAD.

“ Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me.” JOB, xix. v. 21.

SUCH is the language which the most patient of men addressed to his friends, but, alas ! to friends who were but too insensible to his sufferings. The church, from time to time, makes use of the same words to awaken our sensibility towards such of

our brethren, as having edified us upon earth by a regular and Christian life, are undergoing in a place of expiation the decrees of a justice, merciful in its very severities. The sanctity of God, which is incompatible with the least stain of sin, obliges his paternal tenderness to remove from his presence, and purify in painful yet salutary flames the souls of such of the just whose penitence has not been proportioned to their daily weaknesses. But it is the hand of a father who strikes with regret, and who is not unwilling to be propitiated, since he has himself established in his church an efficacious means of affording relief and comfort to these afflicted souls; nay, fearful lest our insensibility and forgetfulness should make us lose sight of the succour we might procure them, Jesus Christ has been pleased to afford us an opportunity, in the very midst of the sacrifice, of making a special mention of their necessities, in what is termed the Memento, or commemoration of the dead. This prayer, therefore, prescribes a new order of duties, and requires particular dispositions in reciting it. The share which Jesus Christ has mercifully assigned these suffering souls in the saving merits of his sacrifice, is worthy of your most serious attention, and my present purpose is to call it to this object.

It would be superfluous in this place, my brethren, to prove the necessity of praying for the dead. I am addressing persons well instructed on this head, whom it would be needless to remind

of all that faith teaches respecting piety towards those who are gone before us, and who like ourselves have combated against flesh and blood. It would be superfluous to place before your eyes either the example of Judas Maccabeus, when he caused offerings to be made for those who had died faithful to the law of Moses; or the testimony of the Fathers of the church, and especially of St Augustine, tending to prove this essential point of our religion. It is not even necessary to awaken the attention of my present hearers upon a duty of such essential importance. I am addressing Christians full of sensibility towards their brethren, full of tender solicitude to relieve the temporal necessities of their fellow-men; I cannot allow myself to suspect such persons of indifference to the spiritual wants and sufferings of those among the faithful who, after their death, are still banished for a time from their celestial country. Besides, a simple exposition of the prayer which the church has consecrated to the alleviation of their pains, is of itself sufficient to inspire the most perfect faithfulness in the discharge of this duty. It invites us by the most tender of motives; it terms these suffering souls *the servants of God*: it represents them as *brethren who are gone before us with the sign of faith*; as justified souls *who slumber in the sleep of peace*. Let us consider them under these different points of view, and we shall find abundant matter to animate our piety, our faith and compassion.

These suffering souls are termed *the servants of*

*God*; consequently they belong to him; they are not separated from his great family the church. Very different from such as die in his displeasure, and are for ever under the anathema of implacable wrath and eternal vengeance, these are the objects of his love and commiseration. He chastises them with lenient mercy; he affords them the means of disarming his justice. They are enrolled in the book of life; their place is appointed in his kingdom; and till this place be filled, the tender heart of their Father and our God is—if I may be allowed the expression—filled with a certain perplexity, which in some degree we may claim the merit of removing, by taking an interest in their welfare.

These souls have served the Lord, and in this respect they are allied to us; they are our brethren, the same vocation has separated them from the number of the unbelieving, they have all been marked with the same seal of adoption. They are children of the same heavenly Spouse; they have been washed in the same blood of the Lamb; they have been nourished with the same bread of life; they have been sanctified by the same word, and have partaken of the same sacraments. All these are ties that bind us indissolubly to them: nay, I can point out others still closer and more sacred. Some of these souls have been allied to us by blood, and by the tender bonds of charity. Here are our fathers, our brothers, our spouses, our friends, our relatives; here are subjects of the same prince, ci-

tizens of the same town, inhabitants of the same district, faithful of the same parish ; here are our pastors, our guides in the way of salvation, our instructors, those who tutored our infancy to virtue, who afforded us a thousand spiritual comforts, and mingled in the midst of us to pray with us ; who, perhaps, better instructed than ourselves in our real necessities, watched over our morals, and removed far from us all such occasions of temptation and danger as might have proved the means of our seduction and ruin.

I hear a prophet giving me this salutary instruction ; ‘ God has given to each one the charge of his neighbour.’ Am I not, therefore, charged with the care of these suffering souls ? or, do they no longer form a part of the mystical body of Christ, of which I am a member ? Are they no longer children of the same church with myself ? On the contrary, does not this church teach me, that this portion of the faithful, though separated from us in appearance, are still really and intimately connected with us by the bonds of charity ; that this is really the same suffering church which claims a community of prayer and of spiritual benedictions ? So that there is not a good work performed, not a grace imparted throughout the whole church, of which they do not enjoy the application. Can any thing be a stronger proof of the pious solicitude of our common mother, than the practice she constantly follows of terminating all her offices with this prayer : *May the souls of the faithful departed, through*

*the mercy of God, rest in peace?* But the church displays a still greater degree of tenderness, in the commemoration which she makes of these souls, in the midst of the august sacrifice: *Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servants, who are gone before us with the sign of Faith:* Such is the second motive she employs to animate our devotion.

These souls have trod the same path which we now tread. They have made the good things of eternity the object of their most fervent hopes; they have lived in the simplicity of faith; they have been to those who lived before us, and some of them even to ourselves, models of piety, of charity, of humility, and patience. They have edified us by their example, and assisted us with their counsels and prayers. In a word, here are those just men, who, though they have sometimes erred through the weakness of humanity, have always kept their hearts untainted by the malice and corruption of sin; and were it possible to draw a comparison between their fidelity and ours, I am apprehensive lest the parallel should turn to their advantage, and to our confusion. At least this consideration may tend to their consolation, by persuading us, that the charity we exercise in their regard, is a kind of homage due to the superiority of their merits and virtues, and that they have a claim to our prayers under the title of justice. Indeed this is the only possession to which they now lay claim in this world. We inherit their riches, their employments, their honours, and their do-

mains; these unsubstantial possessions excite not their envy. But there is a more precious inheritance which they have left behind them, and over which they still maintain their right. We participate in all the prayers of the church, we frequent her sacred offices, we receive her sacraments, we claim a share in all the good works that are performed throughout the whole extent of the Christian world, we are entitled to draw from the inexhaustible treasuries of Jesus Christ. The faith which, like us, these souls received in baptism, and in which they persevered to the last moment of existence, has given them an inalienable right to all these blessings. We should, therefore, be guilty of usurping their rights, if, through a criminal neglect, we failed to grant them a share of the benefits we are enabled to derive from all these sources of salvation. It were devoutly to be wished, that this single consideration were sufficient to interest and fix our compassion in this regard. Exempt from all interested considerations, this would indeed be a display of generous and exalted feeling. Still the church does not wish that we should entirely lose sight of our own necessities in the prayers which she appoints in their behalf; and these very words; *who are gone before us with the sign of faith*, remind us that we also are to follow them. It is not to be supposed that our charity is so unalterably fervent, and our piety so securely grounded, as to render us proof against all the dangers that menace our salvation: it is, therefore,

useful and proper that we should sometimes descend in spirit into that place of expiation and tears; that we should animate our faith by a view of that grief and anguish which a soul must experience when disengaged from the body, and separated from her God; that we should figure to ourselves what we, in the same situation, should think ourselves entitled to expect and solicit from those who survived us. Ah, my brethren, you must feel with me that this is the most powerful motive to awaken our charity, and animate our fervour! There is also another motive not less powerful: *Their souls slumber in the sleep of peace*, and we have a very near and strong interest in their awakening from this slumber. Yes, their souls are asleep, but they are not sunk in the sleep of death eternal; no, compared with this, theirs is justly styled the *sleep of peace*. Even in the midst of the agitations caused by their ardent desires, and their longing sighs after deliverance, they enjoy that precious peace which is the effect of a secure and well-grounded hope. But what are the bounds to these deep and penal slumbers? God alone, who has fixed the term in the decrees of his eternal wisdom, is acquainted with this profound secret: what we are taught by his church is, that he is not inexorable in his justice towards these his beloved children; that, in his church, he has provided a relief for their sufferings; that, among all the good works which he graciously allows to be applied to their benefit, there is no means more efficacious than the



sacrifice of our altars ; that the blood of Jesus Christ alleviates their pains, expiates their offences, and extinguishes the flames in which their stains are purged away ; that we who have the happiness to compass his altar, may, by the application of this precious blood, effect their deliverance ; that, in proportion to the sensibility we testify in their regard, the more do we call down upon them the mercy of God, and attach them to us by the stricter bonds of charity and gratitude.

Were we fully sensible of the extensive and beneficial effects of this sacrifice, what joy should we not experience at beholding a multitude of happy souls every day delivered from these avenging flames ! How inexpressible the consolation, were the Almighty but pleased to reveal to us, that they had been indebted for their deliverance to our compassion, and our faith in Jesus Christ !

Tell me, can there be a greater consolation, than to rescue a miserable fellow-being from the grasp of poverty and want ? Can any eulogium be more flattering, than the benedictions of a numerous family, who were before a prey to misery and hunger, but are now, by our exertions, blessed with comfort and tranquillity ? Hearts the least open to tender and generous feelings, cannot but acknowledge that this pleasure is the most exquisite that a virtuous soul can taste here below. But shall we presume to compare all this to the exalted consolation which that Christian must enjoy, who, by his pious suffrages, has delivered the soul of his

brother from a state of anguish and misery infinitely more oppressive, and placed him in possession of the supreme and infinite good ?

Consider again, how great will be the gratitude felt by these ransomed souls ! And have we not reason to fear, lest a criminal indifference, a cruel forgetfulness, should render them cold and uninterested in our regard, when re-united to their God, and placed in the centre of charity itself ! Reflect on the firm support, the powerful protectors, whom our charity would thus procure us in the presence of a Father who is all tenderness and mercy ! The more poignant their sorrows past, the greater then will be their overflow of joy ; the more ardent their former desires, the more lively their feelings of gratitude for present deliverance. We have stretched out a helping hand to deliver them from the abyss ; they will hold forth a victorious hand to snatch us from hell, and draw us to themselves. So that, when I consider the precept enjoined by the church, of praying for the dead, I see our own interest more immediately consulted, than even that of these suffering souls. Acting in conformity with the injunctions of Jesus Christ on the subject of alms-deeds, we here ‘ make to ourselves friends that, when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting dwellings.’

Nothing can be a stronger proof of the wisdom of *Him* who came to establish a church upon earth, than the care he has taken to provide it with all the means calculated for its support and preservation.

It is at the same time protected internally by the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and externally by the continual intercession of those ransomed souls, who, having experienced the burthen of their natural weakness and corruption, are therefore more solicitous to support us under our own. Let us henceforward enter into the full spirit of this prayer, which the church has consecrated to the relief and consolation of these suffering souls, and direct our most serious attention to a mystery which is at this moment operated, and of whose importance we may not, perhaps, have been hitherto aware.

We know that what is performed during the Mass is a true representation of the sacrifice of the cross, and that every Christian who has assisted at the oblation of the victim, by following the priest in the consecration of the bread and wine, has witnessed, though in an unbloody manner, a renewal of the scenes once transacted on the hill of Calvary. In the same manner we may say, that by uniting himself to the church in the prayers which she offers for the dead, he accompanies Jesus Christ in his descent into hell; that like him, he is engaged in affording consolation to the just who are awaiting the effect of his sacrifice; and that, as Jesus Christ returned not from these regions of sorrow till he had burst the fetters in which their souls were bound, so we, if conducted by a spirit of piety and faith into this place of expiation, may, like Jesus Christ, administer to their consolation and de-

liverance; like him—but by his power—we may lead captivity captive; like him—but by the strength of his arm—we may burst asunder the portals of brass by which their prison is secured; like him—but by the virtue of his blood—we may open the path to that celestial country after which the just have so long sighed, and put them in possession of the fruit of his glorious resurrection.

We will now proceed to those interior dispositions which should accompany this prayer, in order to render it beneficial to these souls, and conducive to our own eternal welfare.

And here, my brethren, it may be necessary to ask, why the church so often makes use of this *Memento*, this repeated request; *That the Lord would be mindful*, as if he ever lost sight of us; as if those souls that are destined eternally to enjoy him, could, for a single instant, become objects of neglect or indifference? Is it with Him who has created us, as with the great ones of this world, who, wallowing in luxury and intemperance, and brutalized by the most shameful passions, lie buried in indolence the most criminal, and insensibility the most revolting? Need there frequent prayers and clamorous supplications to awaken the Lord, and interest him in the lot of his creatures? By no means. This prayer was composed for our instruction; hence the propriety of its being expressed in terms conformable to the language of humanity. Recollect, that we are but men who utter this prayer; men who seek to interest the divine

mercy by such modes of supplication as would be most likely to succeed with our fellow mortals; that expressions, the most noble and sublime, would be far beneath the majesty of him to whom they are addressed; and that, through his loving-kindness, the Almighty condescends to listen to the language of infirmity, and to the simple preparation of the heart.

It is, therefore, in the name of our brethren who are no more, that we address this short prayer. We have seen the motives for our piety towards them, let us now consider the rules laid down in this formulary, which the church employs to interest us in their behalf.

Upon due consideration I find these rules well-suited to direct our piety towards the dead. They are comprised in the very words of the prayer we have quoted, and serve, at the same time, to point out those particular subjects of abuse, that are but too apt to affect this branch of devotion.

In the first place, the word *Memento* is expressive of the assiduity that should accompany our prayers: again, the universality of these same prayers is marked by the words that follow: *Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servants who are gone before us with the sign of faith, and rest in the sleep of peace.* By thus attending to the true sense of these expressions, we shall at once avoid the shameful indifference of those who never pray for their departed brethren, and that spirit of partiality which induces others to interest themselves for such only as were

connected with them either by the ties of blood or of friendship.

But to return to the assiduity that should accompany our prayers—I have already said, that when we address the Lord with this *memento*, we are very far from believing that he has lost sight of those souls whom he loaded with his graces and blessings during their journey through this vale of tears. No; so far from being intended to remind the Almighty of their sufferings, its object is to awaken our remembrance, in order to engage us by our supplications to interest his mercy in their behalf—a mercy that is ever attentive to their groans, and if suspended, is only suspended for a season. God therefore demands a kind of importunity on our part for the purpose of disarming his justice. For by what other means can this be effected? By the groans, the sighs, and the intreaties of these victims of his severity? Alas! in this place of expiation, the effect of their prayers is in a certain degree counteracted by the decrees of his justice. He has been pleased to render their reconciliation dependent on certain essential conditions; and no tears of theirs can extinguish the flames that devour them, till these conditions be fulfilled. Nothing will suffice but the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, for ‘there is no salvation but through him.’ It is necessary that the Saviour of men should renew in their regard the office of mediator, high priest and victim; but it is also necessary that his mercy should act in unison with his

justice, and that due homage should be rendered to each of these attributes. As God, he makes these afflicted souls feel the whole weight of his displeasure ; as man, he expects that we should solicit his merciful assistance. Placed at our head, he wishes to offer a holy violence to his Father ; he is desirous that both the head and the members, animated with the same sentiments of compassion, and suffering, in some degree, with these exiled spirits, should implore their deliverance and restoration to their true country. Are we, therefore, solicitous that God should be mindful of our brethren ? Let us never forget, that they are allied to us by the same faith, and still more by the hope of the same good things in the land of the living, and that throughout eternity they will be united to us by the indissoluble bonds of charity : let us remember, that their weaknesses are ours, that we are surrounded by the same temptations that filled them with alarm, that their fall ought to humble us, that the sorrows which they experience ought to excite our compassion, considering that, perchance, we may one day need the important succour which they now demand : let us remember, that this ministry of mercy which Jesus Christ permits us to exercise conjointly with himself, is, perhaps, one of the most honourable functions with which we could be invested. I will place Saviours in Zion, said the prophet Isaiah ; and we by our prayers participate, in some measure, the character by which Jesus Christ is distinguished ; like him

we become the mediators of our brethren, and the ministers of reconciliation.

Have we, till this moment, given due attention to the importance of this ministry? Have we discharged its duties with fidelity? Have we been penetrated with the views which religion presents on this important subject, and contributed by the assiduity of our prayers to the deliverance of these numerous victims of Almighty justice?

This *memento*, therefore, is not so properly addressed to God, as to all those who assist at the sacrifice of the Mass; for what is the coldness with which we recite this prayer, but a kind of a forgetfulness, from which this *memento* is intended to awaken us? How small the number of those Christians who are feelingly convinced of the obligation imposed on them of praying for the dead; and even among those who acknowledge it as a duty, how many are there, who by a cruel partiality interest themselves for those only, with whom they are connected by the ties of blood and friendship! The church condemns this unjust reserve in the very words of the prayer; ‘To these, O Lord, and to *all* that sleep in Christ, grant, we beseech thee, a place of refreshment, light and peace, through the same Christ our Lord.’

It is of essential consequence, my brethren, to examine how far our sensibility towards our neighbours ought to be carried; and in satisfying this duty, we should be cautious not to swerve from the rules which charity prescribes towards all who



are departed this life. Our holy mother the church is far from wishing to check all those tender feelings which nature cherishes in the heart : on the contrary, in the number of praise-worthy customs she ranks that of observing anniversaries to recal the memory of our departed friends and relatives ; she even enjoins her ministers to conform to the particular intentions of the faithful, by making a special mention of the objects of our pious regret. But how many Christians are there, who, through a want either of instruction or sensibility, confine this office of charity to the mere recommendation of their friends and relatives, and who, through an abuse of this condescension and paternal tenderness of their holy mother the church, neglect to conform to her general intentions at those very seasons which she has particularly consecrated to this important duty ! Thus the stated solemnities destined to call all those to remembrance who have departed in the true faith, are spent on their part in partial lamentations for those of their own kindred or connections. An abuse of this kind cannot be too strongly censured ; we should endeavour to make its abettors feel that this personal devotion, lawful in every other circumstance, becomes in this instance intolerable ; that actual injustice is thereby done to the all-sufficient holocaust ; that it is imposing injurious restrictions upon the charity of the church, and offering a daring outrage to the unbounded charity of Jesus Christ ; that, in fine, it is giving a limited signification to those

prayers whose object is general, and in which all the faithful departed have a right to participate.

The church instructs us by this practice, that in virtue of that communion of saints, by which an intercourse of prayer is maintained between the elect of God and those who are still labouring to render their election sure, the same intercourse still subsists between the faithful who are pursuing the career of life, and those just souls who are on the point of touching at the goal. No one is excluded; all are comprised in these terms: *Famulorum famularumque tuarum*; that is, all such as have fulfilled the service of love, to whatever family or nation they may have belonged, because this very quality of *servants* gives them a right to be ranked in the family of Christ, they form a part of the ransomed race, and though at present separated from his kingdom, they belong, by an indisputable title, to the church of the predestinated, and their names are already enrolled in the book of life.

Convinced of these truths, let us be careful to avoid such abuses; let our prayers be at once assiduous and impartial; let us pray that the blood of Christ, which daily flows upon our altars, may purify them for the enjoyment of their God, and let us pray with confidence. The church seeks to inspire this spirit, by admonishing us; *That they are gone before us with the sign of faith*; and that their end resembles not the sullen repose of death, but the soft slumbers of repose.

There is also another observation which I wish

to impress on your minds. In all the other prayers we address to the Almighty, either in our own behalf, or in that of our brethren, we cannot suppress a certain degree of doubt and perplexity respecting the objects of our petition. Can we be certain that they are always in strict conformity with the designs of heaven, that they are dictated by the spirit of God, that our dispositions are in unison with those of Jesus Christ? or whether, under a multiplicity of circumstances, Jesus Christ might not justly address us as he formerly did his disciples; ‘Till now you have asked nothing in my name?’ But when the question is to pray for the dead, all uncertainty vanishes; their deliverance, their reunion to the centre of all happiness cannot but be in strict conformity with the designs of God. These suffering souls are still the objects of his love; though at present under disgrace, they are certain that the happy period of reconciliation must arrive; and the Almighty has been pleased to afford us the means of accelerating that happy moment. These justified souls are, moreover, worthy of the interest we take in their welfare: faith, whose seal was impressed upon their forehead, and which was the constant guide to their steps; faith, which was heretofore the solace of all their sufferings, and the foundation of their hope, is at present become the source of their consolation, and the object of the confidence with which we address our prayers in their behalf. Let us, therefore, pray that they may obtain what they

have believed in with such unshaken firmness, that they may possess what they have sought with such unwearied perseverance, that they may enjoy what they have desired with such unabated ardour: for the God, to whom all their desires tend, and in a separation from whom consists all their grief, far from despising their sighs and tears, expects, in some measure, that we should mingle our supplications with their sighs, and our prayers with their sufferings.

But if we are certain that our prayers will be heard when we make intercession for these afflicted souls, we are not less certain of being recompensed by the protection of these justified spirits, when admitted by the Almighty into the abodes of glory. This last consideration furnishes some of the most powerful motives for zeal and confidence in the discharge of this duty of tenderness and charity.

Independent of that feeling of sensibility and compassion which is the offspring of charity, and with which all the saints must necessarily be actuated towards those, who like themselves have trodden the same path that conducts to eternal happiness; those souls who have suffered in this place of expiation, and been delivered thence by virtue of our prayers, cannot but feel a more lively charity, a more marked and tender sensibility in our regard. These may be truly called the friends whom we have made to ourselves in heaven: and if to a mere alms-deed, which is but a temporal succour, a transient relief, Jesus Christ has at-

tached so much weight and efficacy ; if a mere glass of water,—a simple consolation bestowed upon a suffering disciple, is to be rewarded with the possession of the God of mercies ; may we not justly conclude, that this office of tenderness which we exercise towards the dead is deserving of a measure of mercy tantamount both to the charity of those souls who solicit the favour, and to the immensity of the happiness which we have procured them by our prayers ? And as the church daily reminds us of this duty, so we may daily avail ourselves of this means of sanctification.

Thus we see, that these motives are not merely calculated to excite our sensibility towards our brethren, our friends, and our relatives, but also towards ourselves. Do we feel a compassionate regard towards our own souls ? let us then be assiduous in the discharge of this duty of charity towards the dead, under the consideration that we also stand in continual need of succour and protection ; if we discharge this duty in a spirit of confidence and impartiality, we shall find that by the exercise of this virtue, the graces and benedictions of heaven will be multiplied an hundred fold, both in this life and throughout eternity. Amen.

## ON THE ' NOBIS QUOQUE PECCATORIBUS.

"For it is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before thy face, but for the multitude of thy tender mercies." DANIEL, c. ix. v. 18.

**M**y brethren, it was in a time of affliction that Daniel addressed this prayer to his God; it was during the captivity in Babylon that he held this language. Taught by woeful experience, the Jews had learned but too late, that the wisdom and justice of the Lord are not to be braved with impunity; that his glory imposes certain limits to his patience; and that a signal act of his vengeance against sinners, equally indicates the rigour of his justice against the impenitent, and the immensity of his mercies towards those who acknowledge his power, adore his wisdom, and bend in humble submission to the just decrees of his providence. Impressed with this truth, the prophet Daniel acknowledges, in the name of his whole nation, that the success of his prayers is not dependent upon his own justifications, but on the sincere and humble avowal which, in the name of his whole race, he makes of the numberless iniquities that have excited the divine indignation, assured that their unfeigned sorrow for past transgressions could not fail to move the Almighty to mercy.

Is not this precisely the conduct of the church, in the prayer we purpose this day to explain, which begins with the words: *And to us sinners?* Is it not

intended to admonish us, that the fruit of the sacrifice is dependent upon the same sincere avowal of our iniquities? Under this consideration she instructs us, that a lively sorrow for past offences, accompanied by a resolution to renounce them in future, is necessary to render this avowal effective; that if our souls are to be regenerated in the blood of the Lamb, a sincere repentance must previously restore us to the newness of life. She, therefore, acknowledges with the prophet, that our own merits contribute nothing to the effect of our prayers, and, that shameful as they are in their nature, our sins, when once expiated by the blood of Jesus, contribute more effectually to draw down the compassion of our God, than all those false virtues which either spring from our pride, or serve to nourish it in our hearts.

We are sinners: the church never wishes us to lose sight of this unhappy title which we brought with us into the world, and to which our continual weakness still proves that we have but too just a claim: accordingly we find that there is scarcely a prayer in the whole service of the church but what speaks of our iniquities, at one time with a view of exciting us to contrition, at another of drawing down upon us the mercy and indulgence of heaven. The latter effect is what the church proposes to herself in the present prayer, which on that account is one of the most interesting of all that compose her Liturgy.

Let us first consider the ceremonies by which it

is accompanied; they will enable us more fully to comprehend the force of the expressions that compose it. The priest elevates his voice in pronouncing the first words of this prayer:—should not this remind us of that cry of iniquity which so often ascends to the throne of his divine justice to insult his adorable Majesty, call down his thunders and provoke his vengeance? Has not the voice of our sins more than once reached the ear of the Divinity, and is it not to be feared, that unless it cease to provoke his vengeance, we must forego the hope of mercy and forgiveness? The abominations of Sodom and Gomorrah cried to heaven for vengeance—the cry was heard, and the fires of his vengeance consumed those unhappy cities. Abandoned to idolatry, and filled with contempt for the laws of God, the nation of Israel laughed at the sword of the Lord that hung suspended over their heads; while the tears of the just, and the prayers of her prophets, were too weak to avert the accumulated horrors of war, famine and captivity, that overwhelmed this devoted race. And, at a later period, while this hardened people still retained the form of a republic, the enormous crime that they perpetrated against the Messiah, filled the measure of their sacrileges, and so highly incensed the divine Justice, that the holy city, the favoured nation, the children of the promise were devoted to anathema: nay, during seventeen hundred years of reprobation, the ardent and ceaseless vows of the church for their return, have not been



able to exhaust the vial of wrath which the Almighty ceases not to pour out upon their guilty heads.

Let us tremble for ourselves, lest more multiplied transgressions, more marked and sacrilegious prevarications should cry still more loudly against us. With the priest let us raise the voice of our hearts to confess that we are sinners. The priest strikes his breast, because he considers this avowal, made in the name of the people, as equally applicable to himself. He is a sinner; and he ought humbly to acknowledge it, not merely from his being taken from among men, but because he bears the seeds of guilt in his heart, and is convinced, by daily experience, of his proneness to evil. Indeed, however high the degree of perfection at which he aims, still he can never approach the altar, without bringing some of those daily wounds which sin inflicts on the soul; happy, if in the discharge of the awful duties of his ministry, his heart be filled with a lively horror of sin, after having fully expiated its guilt by exercises of penance! At the same time that you also strike your breast with him, recal to mind your own iniquities with the same overwhelming sorrow that those experienced who stood at the foot of the cross, and were witnesses of this saving sacrifice. We are sinners, exclaimed the penitent thief, and we suffer with justice; we are guilty said they one to another, who, touched with this mournful spectacle, returned striking their breasts. Doubtless on many this

striking scene made the most salutary impression ; but many also, actuated merely by a passing emotion, would soon forget both the event and the impression it made on their heart. But too true an image of the generality of Christians, who rarely approach the sacrifice in that spirit of faith which is alive to the effects of this mystery, and still more rarely in that spirit of compunction which converts and changes the heart. But let us return to the priest.

Throughout this whole prayer he solicits the mercy of God, and the most natural consequence to be drawn from the avowal that he makes both of his own and his people's iniquities, is, that like the prophet he makes the very multitude of his sins a claim to the divine indulgence ; Thou wilt pardon my sins, says this prophet, for thy name's sake, for they are great. But is it possible that the very multitude of my sins can be a title to mercy ; that the greatest sinners have the best motives for confidence ? What then becomes of the justice of the Lord—that eternal justice which must proportion the punishment to the crime, which will require much from him who has received much, and prepare different degrees of punishment for his enemies, in the same manner as he provides different rewards for his Elect, proportioned to their various degrees of merit ? Faith resolves this difficulty, by attributing to the Almighty a patience that is invincible, a mercy that is infinite, a will delighted with pardoning,

and ever desirous to be propitiated, by acknowledging him as a God, who deems it conducive to his glory, that where iniquity before abounded, his justice should much more abound. To confess with our lips the enormity of sins that we secretly harbour in our hearts, would, doubtless, be to set the Almighty at defiance, and call down his just indignation; but to avow the grievousness of sins that we detest; to solicit pardon, while we treat ourselves with severity, is at the same time to honour his sanctity, to interest his mercy, and to forward the designs of his justice. This the church effectually does in the formulary before us; and to give additional weight to her prayers, she renews her invocation of the saints.

She has already done this in the prayer which we denominated *within the action*, because it immediately preceded the consecration: before the conclusion of this awful action, she again commemorates the saints; but authors who have treated on this subject, make an important distinction between these two invocations. By the former the church instructs us to offer the sacrifice in union with the saints; by the latter she invites us to render ourselves worthy of sharing in their glory. In the one the church named the apostles and those who, after their example, have contributed to the support of religion by their labours, and defended it by their sufferings; in the other, she mentions those who, in their various degrees, have honoured it by their characteristic virtues. Accordingly St John appears at the head

of the prophets, St Stephen as the first of deacons, St Mathias as the representative of the apostles, and St Barnabas of the disciples ; St Ignatius of the bishops, St Alexander of the successors of St Peter, St Marcellinus of the priests, St Peter the exorcist of the Levites, Saints Felicitas and Perpetua of all holy women, while the virgins are represented by those five illustrious martyrs whom the church has always invoked in the celebration of this august sacrifice.

Let us now meditate on the words of this prayer, which, through Jesus Christ, the church addresses to the Almighty. For the faithful departed she has just before implored a place of refreshment, light and peace ; she now solicits for her children, who, sinners as they are, still bear the character of servants of God, this same refreshment after the labours of life ; this same light amidst the obscurities of faith, and this same peace after the warfare of the flesh against the spirit, of the children of darkness against the children of light : and this demand is founded on a firm confidence in the multitude of the divine mercies. These views of mercy are at all times necessary, but more especially after the avowal of our sins.

The object of the church in enumerating these different orders of saints, is to solicit for us a share in their glory ; and hereby she confirms that truth of the gospel, that in the house of the Lord there are many mansions, and that maxim of the apostle St Paul, that there is a diversity of spiritual

gifts; that each one has his peculiar measure and grace; that all are not prophets, apostles, or teachers, and that it is the union of these different gifts which forms that admirable variety with which the spouse of Jesus Christ is said to be surrounded. How striking the spectacle, to behold in the bosom of the church, all the virtues that are practised, all the good works that are performed, and all those holy exercises that are the very life and soul of piety: but, how much more affecting will this spectacle become, when admitted to the society of the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, we behold every species of merit concentrated in Jesus Christ, and diffused by him through all the members of his mystical body! When we behold his wisdom reflected upon the prophets, his zeal communicated to the apostles, his charity to the martyrs, his sanctity to the pontiffs, his unction to the priests, his humility to the deacons, his docility to the levites, and his fidelity to all the disciples of his gospel; to behold his modesty imparted to the holy women, and his purity to the virgins that follow the Lamb.—Struck with so ravishing a spectacle, we shall exclaim with the prophet; ‘Thy friends, O Lord, how exceedingly are they honoured!’ It is then, according to the same prophet, that we shall behold the light itself in Him who is the source of all light and beauty.

But there is another very instructive consideration to be drawn from this invocation of the saints, to which I wish to call your attention. Though

each of us seems entitled to that glory only which belongs to the particular rank which God has assigned us in his church, yet it is possible to partake of their different degrees of felicity in heaven, by imitating their various virtues while here on earth. On a nearer examination of the present prayer, we shall discover a remarkable contrast between the first and last parts of it. The church is about to name some of the most distinguished amongst the friends of God; those faithful souls, who have edified the church by their eminent virtues, their exalted sanctity, their ardent zeal for Jesus Christ; and she begins by exciting us to an avowal of our sins:—*and to us sinners*. But let us remember, that this was also the avowal of all the saints; that they were all conceived in sin, that they all experienced the same weaknesses, and that many of them passed their early lives in the greatest disorders, the recollection of which proved the most powerful motive for their farther advancement and perseverance in virtue. Let us remember, that the sacrifice at which we assist, and to which we are indebted for our reconciliation and acceptance with God, has also been the means of their reconciliation, and the foundation of their fidelity; and that in the bosom of his glory, where they are exempt from every stain, the quality of sinners which we assume in invoking them, reminds them of that indulgence and compassion which they solicited with so much success. Whilst we say to the Almighty; Lord, we trust in the multitude of thy

tender mercies, they also thus address him ; Spare, O Lord, spare thy people ! deliver not thine inheritance to perdition ; manifest towards them the same wonders of thy mercy by which we ourselves were saved. Whilst we entreat *for some part and fellowship in their glory*, they demand that the tables of the marriage-feast may be filled ; they solicit the consummation of the kingdom of Christ ; they feel a holy impatience till their fellow-travellers reach the wished-for goal, and receive the crown of their labours. ‘ Let us hasten to them,’ says St Bernard, ‘ with all the ardour that faith should inspire ; the saints call us, and we hear them not ; they have preceded us, and we refuse to follow ; they have set us the example, and we fail in its imitation.’ Let us study the means to reap the fruit of that communion of saints, which the church applies in this interesting prayer.

I petition the Almighty to be allowed some fellowship with the saints, but more particularly with the holy apostles and martyrs. With St John, the precursor of Jesus Christ, the most eminent of the children of men, the most penitent of Israelites, the most holy of prophets, the most courageous of martyrs. But how can I flatter myself with sharing any part or fellowship with this great saint, if my life be not a life of penitence and retreat ; if I do not courageously resist the dictates of flesh and blood, when they stand in opposition to the spirit of the gospel ? I pray to be associated with St Stephen, a man filled with the Holy Ghost, and

all heavenly wisdom, who, for the purity of his manners, for his fervour and indefatigable zeal, was chosen in preference to all the rest of the disciples, to administer the affairs and distribute the benefactions of the faithful; whom his faith rendered so intrepid in the midst of the synagogue, and his mildness and patience in some manner invulnerable under the blows of his persecutors. But if the apostle St Paul demands what fellowship there can be between the faithful and the unfaithful, ought I not to dread being excluded from this society, if my vigilance is not continual, my fervour habitual, and my sweetness unalterable; so that the poor may find in me a friend, the afflicted a comforter, my enemies an intercessor, and all Christians a pattern and example? I desire to share in the glory of St Mathias, that apostle who was substituted in the place of the apostate disciple, that just man, who united the unanimous testimony of the apostolic college, and the suffrage of Jesus Christ himself, who, by the medium of his Holy Spirit, was pleased to preside at the election; that courageous soldier, whose labours and blood proved to the church a fruitful source of Christians and of martyrs. But his glory can be the portion of those only, who, like him, are inviolably attached to Jesus Christ; who, with heart and mind, have renounced every thing hostile to this spirit of Jesus Christ, and who, after his example, are ready to sacrifice life itself to promote the glory of their divine Master.



The example of St Barnabas becomes a fresh subject for emulation, and the part which he bore in the labours of the great apostle, may serve to give us an idea of his glory, and tend to inspire us with a holy emulation. But he purchased this glory by the journeyings he undertook for the establishment of the gospel, by the perils he encountered, the persecutions he experienced, the torments he endured, and the sacrifices he offered ; while I have scarcely yet put my hand to the great work of my own sanctification. I am yet very far from having resisted unto blood, I, whom the least difficulty is sufficient to overcome, who, faint under the slightest trial, and who would wish to obtain heaven without the smallest struggle or exertion.

After the apostles and disciples, the church proposes the example of St Ignatius, one of the first bishops and most celebrated martyrs of the Christian world ; in his person she presents a model of that sacerdotal firmness which resists iniquity and opposes error ; that unshaken intrepidity which renders a pastor at once the pattern and the father of his flock. I pray for a share in his felicity ; but in order to obtain it must I not imitate his solicitude in discharging the duties that I owe to my inferiors, and his zeal in resisting whatever is inimical to the cause of truth ? Must I not practise his humility in making myself all to all, to gain all to Christ ?

Placed in the chair of St Peter, and the inheri-

tor of the virtues as well as the title and authority of this great apostle, St Alexander is proposed to my confidence and veneration, by the distinction conferred on him by the church in naming him in the liturgy. His divine ordination, the wisdom of his episcopacy, and the glory of his martyrdom, admonish me to remain firmly united to the chair of St Peter, and ever to regard him who fills it as the vicar of Jesus Christ. He is the pilot of that favoured vessel which the fury of the tempest, and the rage of persecution, shall assail in vain. Can we pretend to any part in his glory, if we adhere not, by humble obedience and steady faith, to the church, which Christ has chosen as the centre of unity?

St Marcellinus is in the order of priests destined, by their vocation, to offer the sacrifice of our altars: it was there that he imbibed that spirit of sacrifice which rendered him a living victim, a perfect holocaust; his name reminds me of that continual immolation which God requires at my hands, by which, whatever be my rank or condition in the church, I truly become a priest, enjoy the rights of the priesthood, share in its merits, and am entitled to a share in its rewards.

How rich is the Almighty in his saints! Such is the consoling reflection which the church suggests, by choosing a model for my imitation in the lowest rank of her levites. St Peter, the exorcist, whom she names in the present prayer, is a proof that there is not a single function of the whole hierar-

chy but what confers honour on him that discharges it, and is capable of conducting him to the most eminent sanctity. Encouraged by the example of this holy levite, I too may endeavour to reach the perfection of charity, and gain a name, not to be recorded in the perishable annals of this world, but in the book of life.

How rich is the Almighty in his saints ! This reflection becomes still more striking, when, after this splendid enumeration of apostles and martyrs, I hear honourable mention made of the names of Saints Felicitas and Perpetua, those illustrious women, who, from the moment of their birth, were united by the same ties of blood, who, during life, were connected by the same bonds of faith, and, in death, were still more strictly united by the same sacrifice. They knew how to fulfil their domestic duties, to render to their spouses and children all that nature, tenderness, and religion prescribed, without being deficient in what they owed to their God ; and after having shown, in the interior of their houses, all the domestic virtues of the valiant woman mentioned in the scripture, they ascended the scaffold with all the calmness and intrepidity of the most illustrious martyrs. Can we repeat their names without condemning our own sloth and indifference, without blushing at our constant neglect of the duties of our state, and without forming the most generous resolutions for the future conduct of our lives ?

We behold this edifying catalogue closed with

the names of the five virgins, Saints Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia. We see that the weakest sex, and the tenderest age, can boast of its heroes. It is therefore true that God has chosen the zealous defenders of his religion from what is most feeble, to admonish us that no flesh should glory in his sight; as a lesson to us never to rely upon our own strength, or neglect the succours of divine grace; as a promise of his protection and support, when our temerity shall no longer expose us to danger, and when humility and confidence shall inspire all our prayers, and direct every action of our lives.

Ah, if we were impressed with a feeling conviction of these important truths, we should confidently address the Almighty in the concluding words of this prayer: 'We beseech thee to admit us into the society of these saints, not in consideration of our own merits, but through thine own gratuitous pardon.' We began the prayer by acknowledging that we were sinners; it is not upon our own merits, therefore, that we ground our hopes of mercy: judged on terms like these, who could stand before thee? No, we throw ourselves upon the multitude of thy tender mercies; manifest them in all their extent, by granting us those blessings to which we have no right to pretend; and since each of us has a particular patron in heaven, we beseech thee to listen to the prayers of thy saints. Vouchsafe to accept the same sacrifice which they offer in unison with us; receive the blood of so many martyrs

united to the blood of thy Son, as a host of propitiation, a victim of agreeable odour, a perfect and agreeable holocaust. It is through Jesus Christ that we demand the favour; it is through Jesus Christ that we expect its fulfilment; it is through Jesus Christ that we hope to praise thee through ages without end. Amen.

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ON THE WORDS, 'PER IPSUM, &c.'

All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made.  
ST JOHN, chap. i. v. 3.

**M**y brethren, this truth is sufficiently evident, whether we consider the operations of the divine word, either in the order of nature or in that of grace. In the order of nature, it is said of Jesus Christ, that, in quality of the eternal wisdom, he presided and assisted at the creation of all things; in the order of salvation, it is through him that every grace and every perfect gift descends from the Father of light: It is, therefore, through him that the sacrifice of the Mass, the most ineffable of all mysteries, is operated; it is through him that adequate reparation is made to the majesty of an offended God; it is through him that the sanctification of our souls is consummated. These words, therefore, which the church puts in the mouth of her minister, form the most proper conclusion to a series of prayers, by which the most holy, august, and efficacious of all mysteries is operated. It is

an acknowledgement of the divine attributes, inspired at once by confidence and humility:—by confidence, since we thereby confess that nothing can be truly great except through Jesus Christ:—by humility, since we acknowledge that, without him, no homage can be acceptable to the Father, no oblation capable of purifying us from sin. It is, therefore, of no small importance to enter fully into the spirit of this prayer, in order to recite it with due effect.

The church terminated the preceding prayer with her usual conclusion: she offers her demand in the name of Jesus Christ, and it is through Jesus Christ that she hopes to obtain it. The following words explain the motives of this confidence: ‘Through Jesus Christ our Lord—by whom, O Lord, thou dost always create, sanctify, quicken, bless, and give us all these good things. It is by him, and with him, and in him, that all honour and glory are given to thee, O God, the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, for ever and for ever.’

Jesus Christ, by the omnipotence with which he is no less essentially invested than his Eternal Father, is the author of all good, and the creator of all things, conjointly with his Father: ‘all things were made by him, and without him was nothing made.’ All things, both spiritual and material, those irrational and those endowed with reason, proceeded from his hand; it is he who gave them life and motion; it is he who presided at the es-

tablishment of that admirable order which reigns throughout the universe, and the heavens, in announcing the glory of the great Creator, at the same time publish the co-operative wisdom of the eternal Word. The bread and wine that we have offered were, therefore, by their nature, worthy of our admiration: but they become objects of our gratitude, when considered relatively to their destination. The Word has created them for our use; he has designed them for the support of life, for the perpetuation of beings created to his image and likeness.

But, what is infinitely more wonderful than this, he has also sanctified these gifts, by changing them into his own substance. It is now no longer material, but spiritual and life-giving bread; it is no longer the food of the body, but of the soul;—a species of food, not destined to support a mere perishable existence, but to ensure us the possession of life eternal. It is no longer formed of corruptible elements; it is the bread of the elect; the product of the true vine which the Father has planted: it is perfectly holy, both as to its essence, its destination, and its effects. It is truly the tree which bears the fruit of life, planted, says one of the Fathers, in the midst of the church, to furnish all those with a certain antidote who had imbibed the poison of sin. With this bread we may daily become strengthened in the newness of life. We cannot expect to avoid all the blows aimed at us by our infernal foe, but here is an effectual remedy

for all the wounds of the soul ; we cannot expect an exemption from the common ills of humanity, but under all our afflictions, we shall find the chalice presented us by Jesus at his holy altar, filled with the wine of consolation : in the hour of temptation it will prove a source of confidence and strength ; under spiritual languor and aridity, a subject of joy and animation. It is the fruit of benediction, nurtured in the midst of benedictions ; the bread which Christ broke and blessed, is a source of benediction to all who partake thereof : it is said of Him, who is the living bread that came down from heaven, that in him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. And it is *to us that thou givest all these good things* ; a circumstance that has induced some of the doctors of the church to observe, that the angels in heaven, though inebriated with the torrent of eternal delights, regard with a holy jealousy the function exercised by the priests of the new law : they behold them operate, through Jesus Christ, mysteries that it is not given them to perform, because, at the moment they are rendering the homage of profound obedience to their Sovereign Lord, he condescends to subject himself to his creature man : because He, who to save us, assumed the substance of man in preference to that of angels, renews in some degree the mystery of his incarnation in every place and on every occasion that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

In these short reflections, you behold a summary of what Jesus Christ has done in our behalf : let us



now attend to the explanation given by the church of what he has done, and what we ought to do in him and through him, for the glory of his eternal Father.

It is *through Jesus Christ* alone that we can render to God the homage that is due: with hands defiled with iniquities, the Almighty could receive no homage from us worthy his supreme Majesty. Impressed with this conviction, St Bernard exclaims; ‘ Without Jesus Christ, how could I presume to draw nigh to the Godhead? Such is his purity, that no accession of sanctity can add aught to his divine essence; whilst I, by my nature, am so corrupt, that no new degree of corruption could sink me deeper in disgrace.’ For this, therefore, was Jesus Christ given to me, that the vileness and corruption of my nature might no longer be an obstacle to the homage due from me to the Godhead; that, purified by an union with his essence, I might honour God as he deserves to be honoured. Therefore through Jesus Christ I am enabled to make every kind of atonement, to fulfil every kind of homage, to render every kind of honour to the Deity; there are no longer any bounds to my feelings and my gratitude; the eternity of God is honoured, since I offer the living and true victim; the sanctity of God is revered, since it is the High-priest of spotless purity who offers by my hands; his justice is acknowledged, since it is the victim of propitiation that is immolated; his mercy is in some degree seconded, since it is the mediator between God and

man, the angel of peace, who wafts the grateful odour of the holocaust even to the altar on high; his immensity is adored, inasmuch as this is the sacrifice of all times and all places, a sacrifice that shall have its consummation only in eternity. Behold what I am capable of doing through Jesus Christ; behold the various degrees of honour I am enabled to render to the Almighty; so that, if by the corruption of my nature I am unworthy to approach his divine Majesty, yet through Jesus Christ I am empowered to render him *all honour and glory*.

It is *with Jesus Christ* that I offer; for the ministry which the priest exercises, is not a mere image or simple representation of the sacrifice of the cross, but a positive renewal of this first immolation. The action which he performs is identified with that performed by Christ himself. If the priest blesses the oblation, Jesus Christ imparts to the offering the value that sanctifies it; if he raises his eyes to heaven, or extends his hands in prayer, Christ presents to the eternal Father his own hands pierced with wounds and impurpled with his blood; if the minister renders thanks, if he humbles himself, or bewails his offences, Jesus Christ also renders thanks, and implores the clemency of his Father, he reminds him of that contrition, that grief for sin which once rent his bosom with mortal anguish. Thus the priest does nothing without Jesus Christ; he becomes, in some measure, another Christ, a visible word to give

the people a sensible representation of what is performed by the invisible Word on the altar of heaven. But what is still more strange and astonishing, it may with equal truth be said of a bad priest as of the most holy and edifying of ministers, that he truly offers with Jesus Christ. Yes—he who did not abhor the virgin's womb, performs a still greater miracle at the moment of the sacrifice, by manifesting no visible horror at the guilty minister, in whose polluted hands he is borne for the sanctification of his church. Thus we see, that with Jesus Christ the most unworthy of priests can communicate, offer, and consecrate, the most adorable of sacrifices: this consideration ought to fill us with alarm and apprehension not only for the guilty minister, but for ourselves, as often as we approach these awful mysteries in unworthy dispositions: for we must never forget, that with the priest we really offer with Jesus Christ; that this association to the same ministry, imposes a strict obligation of being holy, as he himself is holy.

In fine, it is *in Jesus Christ* that this sacrifice is offered. In him alone all the merit and all the value of this sacrifice are concentrated; it is upon him alone that God beams a look of mercy, and it is by this benign look reflected upon us that we are saved and sanctified. Hence it is, that the church instructs us not to place our confidence in any of the exterior ceremonies that accompany it, nor in a mere recital of the forms of prayer employed in offering it. All these things are only so

far holy, as they bear an immediate relation to Jesus Christ. Therefore to fulfil the ends of sacrifice, we must be entirely united to him. In him we shall find that sanctity in which we are deficient, that attention and fervour which our weakness is unable to attain. In him all our thoughts become holy, our desires pure, and our wills upright and under due restraint. In him we are strong in spite of our frailty, steadfast in spite of our inconstancy, just in spite of the corruption of our nature. In him we render honour and glory to the eternal Father, we acknowledge him as the principle of all things, we avow our total dependence on him, we confess his power, his immensity, his wisdom; we anticipate his justice, we solicit his mercy, we bless him in all his works. This prayer also, short as it is, contains the substance of the most lengthened forms of devotion, since it is made in the unity of the Holy Ghost, of that divine spirit, who alone can form in our hearts those ineffable sighs of love that ascend even to the throne of mercy. He is the bond of charity between the Father and the Son; he also becomes the precious bond of love that unites us to these two divine Persons. This prayer is not, therefore, bounded by the present life, nor these our homages confined to this transitory scene of existence; it is truly the canticle of eternity, since these same words which we repeat with the church, form the immortal concert of the blessed, who are incessantly publishing the glory and honour, power and dominion,

that belong to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

How important, therefore, it is, my brethren, that in reciting this prayer our hearts should be in unison with our lips; that this celestial canticle should never be disgraced by our attachment to creatures. In pronouncing these words, we may say with truth, that our conversation is in heaven, since we unite our voices with those of the angels and saints; but if on our return to our homes, our thoughts still continue as earthly, our desires as carnal, and our affections as disorderly as before, we, in some measure, quit the abodes of immortality to enjoy the frivolous amusements of this land of exile; we foolishly prefer the language of men to that of the friends of God.

But, O good Jesus, permit us not to be so insensible; Thou, by whom, with whom, and in whom we bless, praise and adore thy eternal Father: be thou the source of the homages we render him, the model of the sacrifices we offer, and the spring of all the benedictions for which we hope; that by thee, and in thee we may render him all honour and glory in time, and with thee may obtain the happiness of blessing and loving him throughout endless ages. Amen.

## ON THE PATER NOSTER.

“Teach us to pray.” LUKE, c. xi. v. 1.

**I**T would seem, my brethren, as if we had no further need of the lesson which the apostles of Christ heretofore demanded of their divine Master; especially if we consider the prodigious variety of prayers, the numberless forms of devotion that have been composed, both to solicit temporal succour, and those graces that are necessary to salvation. Yet, if we do but reflect on the little success of our prayers, and the visible opposition between our practice and our solicitations for grace, we shall see the necessity of repeating with unabated ardour; ‘O Lord teach us to pray:’—that is, in addition to the light and instruction which we have received from thy church, vouchsafe to superadd that relish, those feelings and dispositions, which are requisite to enable us to pray as we ought. Instructed by our own experience, and by the frequent lessons of the church, in the full extent of our necessities, we feel in what we are deficient; but distracted by a thousand sensible and external objects, we pray without attention, fervour, or recollection. Let us, therefore, profit by the instructions which this part of the Mass is so well calculated to afford, and learn what is requisite to impart to this prayer in particular, as well as to all the rest of our devotions, their due weight and efficacy.

By means of the different ceremonies that accompany the august sacrifice of our altars, the church has successively conducted us from the preparation to the instruction, from the instruction to the oblation, from the oblation to the consecration; and by the present prayer she introduces us into the fifth part, which is preparatory to the communion. But, perhaps, it may be asked why the church has not placed the Lord's Prayer at the head of all the other prayers that compose the Liturgy, since it should be the model of every supplication that we address to the Godhead? The practice of the primitive church will serve as an answer to this question. The Lord's Prayer was the last in which the Catechumens were instructed, and it was taught them immediately before the administration of baptism. Doubtless the intention of the church in this respect was, that they might be sufficiently instructed in the principles of their belief, before she intrusted them with a prayer, which can only be repeated with effect, when a spirit of faith accompanies the expressions which the lips pronounce; doubtless, too, because she regarded this prayer as a summary of all the truths of salvation, of all the demands that a Christian can make, and of all the dispositions that should accompany him to the foot of the altar. This appears a sufficient explanation of the conduct of the church in choosing the Lord's Prayer as a preparation for the holy communion; and to enter fully into her views, let us study the sentiments that

should animate us in reciting it under these particular circumstances. It is not my intention to enter into a detailed explanation of all its parts, as that may be found in your various books of instruction: my present object is merely to consider the relation it bears to the sacrifice of the Mass, and why of all other prayers, this is the most proper to apply the fruit of the holy mysteries.

There are three points of view in which this will most clearly appear; for an attentive perusal of the present prayer will remind us, *1st*, of the order of our demands; *2dly*, of the object of these demands; and, *3dly*, of the manner in which they should be made.

As to the order of our demands,—the glory of God, our own salvation, and that of our neighbour, together with every succour, both temporal and spiritual, successively engage our attention throughout this prayer; while, at the same time, these objects are kept so distant, and rendered so subordinate to each other, that nothing but wilful obstinacy could misconceive their object. We know that it was dictated by him, who had previously given this advice to his disciples; ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be superadded unto you.’ Accordingly, we begin by praying that the *kingdom of God may come*; and as the possession of this kingdom is rendered dependent upon our justice, the fulfilment of this justice is expressed in these other words; *Hallowed be thy name—thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*. Therefore, however a



Christian may be engaged in the things of this world, if, in reciting this prayer, he weighs its terms, and studies its spirit, it is impossible to deceive himself on so important a point; he cannot but see that the material bread which forms his bodily nourishment, is an object of inferior concern, and ought only to occupy his thoughts when he has given his whole attention to the invisible food of the soul; that, however strongly he may feel inclined to the gratification of his own will, his own desires and inclinations, yet that this will is not lawful, that these desires and inclinations are not allowable, except they be in perfect conformity to the will of heaven. And it is worthy of remark, that the church has never deviated from this established order in all the prayers that compose her liturgy. What she first demands of God is the remission of sins, the reconciliation of the sinner, and his re-establishment in justice; health, prosperity, and other temporal advantages, form an inferior and secondary object of her solicitude. Whence comes it, then, that the majority of Christians bring to this sacrifice hearts so carnal and worldly? Whence is it, that the minds of almost all who assist thereat are either distracted by ideas of fortune, and an establishment in the world, or overcome by the temporal losses and accidents that befall them? Can we any longer be astonished, that even a prayer of such holiness and efficacy, should be repeated on their part with so much disgust, and with so little effect? Can we be surprised that the Almighty

should abandon so many Christians to the perverse desires of their hearts, when we behold them turning their eyes from him to seek after perishable goods? But is it not a humbling reflection, that their grovelling desires are more attached to the things of earth than even the most carnal of the Jews of old? Let us, as often as the priest raises his voice to utter this admirable prayer, let us also elevate our hearts, and attend to the short but beautiful and energetic preface by which it is introduced.

Breaking at length from the long silence of the canon, the priest repeats in an audible voice; *Let us pray*; and disposes us for the recital of this most efficacious of all prayers, by the best of all possible motives. ‘Being instructed,’ he continues, ‘being instructed by thy saving precepts, and following thy divine directions, we presume to say; Our Father,’ &c.; that is,—we have the gracious instructions of our divine Lord and Master to serve as a rule in the prayer we are about to repeat. In this holy exercise, we have a God for our model, our teacher, and our master: therefore, though it would be temerity in us to presume to address the Almighty of ourselves, yet we can speak with confidence under the sanction of so unerring a guide. Hence, in repeating this divine prayer, we may infer the obligation of conforming ourselves to the intentions of Him by whom it was dictated; and if the apostle, in speaking of the mystery of the cross, exhorted the first Christians to enter into the same sentiments that animated Jesus Christ, I may here

repeat the same exhortation to all those who desire to repeat this prayer with proper effect: If you wish to pray with Jesus Christ, in union with Jesus Christ, and in the name of Jesus Christ, it will not be sufficient merely to adopt the words and expressions of Jesus Christ; the glory of God and our own salvation must, after his divine example, be the first and principal objects of our demand: this is the best way of conforming to that order which Christ himself has prescribed.

I say, in the second place, that in this prayer we find the summary of every reasonable demand, so that there is no possible object of petition which may not be referred to the Lord's Prayer; and we may justly say of the Christian who has recited it with a lively faith and unremitting attention, that he cannot possibly have any thing farther to demand. It is a striking testimony of the love which Jesus Christ bears in our regard, who, according to the apostle, has shown no partiality by calling the rich, the noble and the great to the knowledge of his gospel, but has rendered the powerful resources of prayer of easy attainment to the lowest and the most simple of mankind, that they may have an equal right to his heavenly kingdom. Therefore, to the confusion of those who have had the means of solid instruction, we see persons unblessed with education, and ungifted with extensive knowledge, recite this divine prayer with more fervour, recollection and faith, than the most enlightened and the best instructed Christians. Hence the rapid

progress of the former in the ways of humility, patience and detachment from sensible objects, whilst the latter are so full of languor, sloth and tepidity, that one would think they had but just come to the knowledge of the faith.

To what can we attribute this indifference, but to the different spirit with which the one and the other are animated in the time of prayer, and especially in the recital of this most interesting of all prayers? In truth, what beauty, what unction must that Christian find therein, who recites it with sentiments of true faith! He beholds an abridgement of his whole religion, a God, who is raised infinitely above him, since he is in heaven; and yet is brought nigh to him by mercy, since he is authorised to call him by the endearing title of Father—a God, whose name is holy and terrible, and yet becomes a name of tenderness and love to those who glorify it—a God, whose power extends over all beings; who said, and they were made; commanded, and they were created; but who in the exercise of his power over us, makes our obedience the source of true happiness—a God, who retired in the secret sanctuary of his glory, is accessible only to the angels that contemplate and serve him, yet who disdains not to render men the associates in their consoling ministry, since he wishes to be served by them on earth as he is by these blessed spirits in heaven—a God, who is all-sufficient for himself, and whose kingdom is independent of our homage and service; yet who per-

mits us to await the coming of his kingdom, as the reward of these very services.

Such are the truths which the faithful Christian discovers in this admirable prayer; such is the detail of his duties towards God—a detail as consoling as it is instructive. Here too he is abundantly provided with all the means of sanctification. To nourish his soul he requires the invisible succours of divine grace, and to support his body the common necessities of life; both are included in the expression, *our daily bread*; in praying for this, he solicits the maintenance both of his animal and spiritual life. *Give us this day our daily bread*; that is—permit not our soul to languish for want; if it is sorrowful, nourish it with thy healing promises; if weak, confirm it with thy heavenly strength; if attacked by the infernal foe, fortify it with thy might; if it feel a holy hunger and thirst after justice, fill it with thy divine grace; let it never be separated from Jesus Christ, the life-giving bread that came down from heaven. May he become its daily bread; may he become the model of its daily imitation, and never suffer it to hunger in vain.

*Give us this day our daily bread*; that is—since thou hast made life dependent upon the fruit of our labours, grant they may never become an occasion of sloth, or a source of sensuality. All that we ask is bread, that is, such things as are of indispensable necessity; we term it *daily bread*, because all our real wants are confined to the pre-

sent day. All other wants are imaginary, as being the effect of impatience, covetousness, or a distrust in Providence. But we ask not this daily bread for ourselves alone; the interests of our neighbour and the charity we owe him, are duties inculcated also in the Lord's Prayer. The Christian is forbidden to refer any thing to himself alone: but how little is this prohibition attended to by the age in which we live, where self-interest narrows the heart, and becomes the ruling principle of every action! The Christian has been taught by his divine Master, that he can claim no right to the graces and the good things which he solicits, except he allow his neighbour to participate, by associating his necessities with his own in the prayers that he addresses to the Almighty. Therefore we say not *my* Father, but *our* father: nor is it not for myself alone, but for all my fellow-men that I pray that *his kingdom may come*. Hence this daily bread, whether considered in a material or a spiritual sense, ought to be shared among us, as among the members of one numerous family.

I begin by excusing the trespasses of my neighbours, and pardoning their offences in my regard, as some plea for soliciting the same indulgence. The temptations that beset, the evils both spiritual and temporal that threaten us, are miseries so common to us all, that I ought to be as apprehensive for my neighbour as for myself; I should pray for his deliverance with the same earnestness that I solicit for my own. Such, in substance, are the

resources offered me in the Lord's Prayer, both for the avoiding of evil, and the attainment of good.

I could also show, if time permitted me, that the manner of approaching God in prayer, is pointed out in the Our Father. Suffice it to say, that it enjoins that spirit of submission which humbly leaves to the Almighty the choice of the time, the graces and the means of sanctification. It enjoins that spirit of confidence, which prays without doubting, and waits without murmuring; that spirit of humility which acknowledges its miseries, and avows its transgressions; in fine, that spirit of charity which makes us love God for his own sake, and our neighbour for God's sake. Therefore to recite this prayer in a proper spirit, is to unite the merits and ensure the fruit of every other prayer; it is to demand for the present time whatever can effectually conduct to salvation, and for a future life, every thing that can fill the full extent of our desires throughout eternity. Amen.

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#### ON THE PRAYER LIBERA NOS, &c.

"O Jerusalem, if thou hadst but known the things that are for thy peace!"—LUKE, c. xix. v. 42.

SUCH was the last reproach which Jesus Christ denounced upon that faithless nation, in whose behalf he had performed so many prodigies, and to which he had offered so many means of salvation. It was some days before his passion, that he pro-

nounced these words over the unhappy Jerusalem, while the tears that flowed from his eyes were a proof how deeply his heart was affected by the ingratitude of this devoted race. They were about to arraign him as an impostor, who sought to embroil the nation by principles repugnant to the law: while, on the contrary, the sole object of his coming amongst them was to bring them peace; that peace which Israel had admonished them to seek; that peace which Ezekiel had promised in the name of the Lord. Yet because this peace corresponded not to the carnal views of this grossly-minded people, it was rejected; and he, who was truly in their regard the angel of the covenant, the Prince of peace, is unheeded and despised; is obliged to complain that Jerusalem, his favoured city, knew not the things that were for her peace. The new Jerusalem—the church of Jesus Christ, teaches us to sue for this peace in the prayer that immediately follows the Lord's Prayer; and she sees with grief and pain that many of her children neglect the means of attaining it: she often mingles her tears with those of her divine Spouse, and addresses them in his words; Ah, if you did but know the things that are for your peace! As for us, my brethren, let us strive to learn this salutary truth, by meditating on the words and entering into the spirit of this prayer.

The subject of our present Instruction may be regarded as a mere extension of the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, in which Jesus Christ teaches



us to pray, that we may be delivered from evil. The church deemed it her duty to be more explicit on this subject, with a view to teach us, that although the Lord's Prayer contain every thing for which we either pray or ought to pray, yet God disdains not to lend an indulgent ear, when either through gratitude for some blessing received, or out of apprehension for some impending evil, we presume to address him in a tone of greater earnestness, provided the object of our prayer be immediately referred to his glory and to our own salvation.

The present formulary was added to the Lord's Prayer in the early ages of the church, since it is found in some of the most ancient sacramentaries, or books destined for the use of the altar. It appears that throughout this prayer the church had in view the persecutions which she experienced from the Pagan emperors; she speaks of evils present and to come; she prays for an exemption from sin, and for tranquillity of mind, in order to serve God with less restraint. It would seem, too, that the first Christians had a high idea of this prayer, which sprung from the marked attention that the church gave to its recital. It was pronounced in a more elevated tone of voice than the other prayers of the Canon, with a view, no doubt, that the congregation might not fail to join therein; and the custom is still retained of chaunting it on Good Friday in the same tone as the Collects, because on this day, which is consecrated to the memory of

the great mystery of our redemption, the church unites all the objects of the various prayers she has offered separately during the other seasons of the year; and as the present prayer comprises them all, she is desirous that on this day it should be pronounced with all possible solemnity.

Let us, in the first place, examine the relation it has to those times of persecution in which it was probably composed, and afterwards consider the application that may be made thereof to the actual necessities of the church and of the different members that compose it. Let us transport ourselves in spirit to that dreadful period, when the storms of persecution raged with such violence against the vessel of the church: let us figure to ourselves the first Christians, assembled in subterranean recesses, scarcely daring to raise their voice, for fear of arousing those angry lions by which they were surrounded on every side; overwhelmed with the bitterest grief at the thought of such of their brethren as had yielded to the menaces, or been seduced by the flattering caresses of their enemies; often separated from their beloved pastors, whose blood was still reeking in the public places, or at the gates of the city; perhaps exposed, at the moment of quitting the holy places, to be dragged to the foot of the tribunals, there to render to Jesus Christ the greatest, the most noble, the most generous—but, perhaps, at the same time, the most dangerous of all testimonies; forced to be spectators of the most revolting scenes of horror and fe-

rocity, and oftentimes themselves doomed to undergo all that the most subtile cruelty, the most ingenious barbarity could devise. Such is a feeble sketch of the situation of the first Christians during the days of trial and persecution: such are the evils from which they prayed to be delivered in the Lord's Prayer, and against which they solicited fresh succours in the present prayer which the church has added to the former.

Placed in situations so fearful and alarming, let us consider the peculiar import of this prayer in the mouth of these Christians. *Deliver us from evil*, said they; but how can we reconcile this prayer of the church with that love of suffering, that thirst after martyrdom, which animated the greater number of her children? In the midst of dispositions like these, what becomes of that holy joy which they experienced, when they were thought worthy of suffering any thing for the name of Jesus Christ, of that heroic courage which rendered them invincible in the midst of torments? We must allow, at least, that this is a proof of that charity which is not presumptuous, and which learns to distrust in its own strength; what the first Christians understood by this deliverance from evil, was doubtless that protection against violent temptations which would guide them to shun evil, and that strength under unavoidable temptations, which would enable them to triumph over their most violent assaults. They prayed *to be delivered from all evils, past, present, and to come*—the first, because charity

rendered them sensible to the misfortune of those who had suffered themselves to be surprised—the second, because a personal interest kept them on their guard against the persecutors by whom they were surrounded—the last, because a holy distrust in themselves had made them apprehensive of the same terrible relapses among their brethren, of which they had, more than once, been the melancholy spectators. With this view, they addressed themselves with confidence to that tenderest of mothers, that most powerful of virgins, the virgin-mother of Jesus : they also claimed the intercession of those three apostles, who had courageously drank the cup of the Lord, even to its less—St Peter, St Paul, and St Andrew. For the same purpose, they also conjured all the saints who, like them, had trodden the same painful career, to intercede in their behalf, and preserve them from striking upon the rock of scandal and offence. They solicited *unity and peace* for the whole church : peace among the faithful, that charity might be the bond of their whole society ; peace on the part of their persecutors, that the reign of Jesus Christ might be more rapidly and more effectually established ; peace among Christians, that the church, attacked from without by the rage of persecution, might no longer be torn from within by the less apparent, but not less deadly violence of heresy and schism.

They had also recurrence to the mercy of God for deliverance from two evils, *sin*, and the *continual disturbances* they experienced from the ene-

mies of the faith. Such was the import of this prayer in the first days of Christianity. It is impossible to open any page of the early annals of the church, without seeing its effects written in broad and visible characters. With St Cyprian, we might describe the first Christians prostrate at the foot of the holy altars, like lambs devoted to sacrifice; yet, on quitting the holy places, courageous as lions in resisting the violence and confounding the cruelty of their judges and executioners. And shall this prayer, so powerful in their mouths, be ineffectual in ours? Has the church preserved it with such pious care and veneration, merely to give us a cold and lifeless image of the faith of our fathers? If the recital rekindle not our almost extinguished faith, is it not because we are strangers to its spirit? Have we less need, in these days of darkness and depravity, to exclaim; Deliver us, O Lord, from the evils that threaten us on every side, from the numberless sins that deform the soul, and render it unworthy of thy presence. These are the *past* evils that fill us with alarm. The tyrant passions make fearful havoc in our hearts, and involve us in a warfare far more destructive than the most cruel persecutions:—such are the *present* evils that afflict us. Snares without number beset our steps, obstacles of almost insurmountable magnitude oppose our advancement in virtue:—such are the *future* evils that threaten our ruin. Oh, exert the power of thy almighty arm to repel these hosts of foes that inspire our destruction! Thou art *our*

*Father*, and we delight to invoke thee by that endearing appellation; but thou hast also near thee a tender mother, who is ever ready to present our applications. Thou art our head; but thou hast given us a visible representative here below, in the person of the prince of the apostles, the head of the apostolic college, who still bends from the height of heaven, and assists us in our conflicts. Thou art our Teacher and Guide; but thou hast entrusted the administration of thy word to Paul, that vessel of election. Who can be better acquainted with our evils than he who experienced them all? A persecutor before he was called to be an apostle, he well knows the influence that prejudice and example possess over the mind of man: exposed during the whole of his ministry to trials of every kind, yet ever triumphant through thy grace, he will not fail to obtain the same victories for us. Thou art our victim, and the cross is the funeral pile on which thy great sacrifice was consummated: yet this very cross had its charms for St Andrew; he beheld it with transport and mounted it with joy. After thy example, he has learnt to interest himself in behalf of thy church, and therefore she solicits his intercession. May all the saints who have experienced thy mercy, exert the same kind office in our behalf. Their painful trials are past, and they are now fixed in the enjoyment of unalterable peace; may they obtain us the same blessing in this sorrowful abode of disquietude and anguish. We pray that it may be granted *in our*

*days* : not merely that everlasting peace to which thy saints have attained in heaven by virtue of their glorious triumphs here below, but that peace which virtue produces by anticipation in the heart ; that peace which is thy choicest gift, which is equally proof against the shock of the passions, the storm of tribulation, and the rage of persecution. Grant especially, that we may find this peace in the expiation of sin ; and if, through the weakness and corruption of our nature, this evil be unavoidable, let the remedy be as prompt as the disease ; thus, *through the assistance of thy mercy, may we be always free from sin.* Grant, we beseech thee, that a holy calm may succeed to those continual agitations that fill us with alarm : those agitations of the heart that arise from a conscience unfaithful to thy law ; those agitations of the mind, caused by the clouds of doubt as to the principles of faith, with which the enemy of truth is ever seeking to overspread the understanding ; those interior agitations, which in the sinner are productive of remorse, in the just of perplexing scruples, and in weak souls of excessive fear ; exterior and sensible agitations, caused by the scandals, the raillery, and the blasphemies of the wicked ; agitations in families, when broils and dissensions arise to interrupt their harmony ; agitations in kingdoms and empires, when conflicting interests enkindle war and all its horrors ; but above all agitations in thy church, when the spirit of heresy and schism seduces her unwary children.

Such, O my God, is a part of the evils that fill us with alarm, and from which we pray to be delivered in these words; *May we ever be secure from all disturbance.* Still, if as thy apostle assures us, there must be heresies in the world; if, as we learn from experience, trouble and sorrow are the portion of man here below, grant, that amidst all these evils, we may ever enjoy a holy serenity. Far from us be that proud confidence, that dangerous presumption, which only dissembles the danger to rush into it with more daring imprudence! The assurance for which we pray, is founded upon thy mercy, which thou canst never forget; on thy providence which can never desert us; on the security of thy promises which can never fail; on the adorable blood of Jesus Christ, whose superabundance shall never be exhausted. Resting on securities like these, we shall only look back upon *past evils* to expiate them by penitence, we shall regard *present evils* only to offer them up to thee, and *future evils* only to avoid them, and to aspire with more fervour after that eternal peace which nothing shall ever interrupt. Amen.

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ON THE PAX AND THE CEREMONY THAT ACCOMPANIES IT.

"Christ rising from the dead. dieth now no more." ROM. c. vi. v. 9

**B**EHOOLD here, my brethren, the clearest idea that the apostle could give us of the resurrection of Je-



us Christ, and of the most consoling truth of our religion. If the risen Jesus dieth now no more, then our faith is not in vain, nor our hopes groundless and insecure. If he is risen, after having undergone the punishment of sin, then we know that he had only the appearance of guilt, and that its stain did not reach his heart. He is therefore no less true in his words, than admirable in his miracles, and it would argue a strange infatuation on our parts, if unmoved by the force of the former, and insensible to the splendour of the latter, we failed to render him the homage of our submission and obedience. But if, from the moment of his resurrection, death had no more dominion over him, why doth this dominion still remain in full force against us, whom a resurrection, formed upon the model of his own, should have rendered like unto himself?

But have I not dwelt too long upon a truth, which however interesting in itself, might seem to divert me from my present subject? By no means: after beholding this divine Saviour in a state of immolation and death, I may surely consider him as in a state of resurrection and life, from the moment the priest announces the effect of this death as applied to us through his resurrection. In my explanation of the sense of this ceremony, I have followed the opinion of many learned commentators, who consider the action of the priest in placing the consecrated host above the chalice, as representative of that precious moment when the Supreme Deliverer was raised by his own

energy from the tomb, and rendered us for ever secure of the fruit of his sacrifice. This thought will lead us to meditate on the object of the present ceremony, and on the prayers which are expressive of its spirit.

The present is one of those parts of the Liturgy which seems to claim the least, and yet really merits the most of our attention : it consists of a short prayer, and is accompanied by a ceremony rapid enough to escape the attention of such as are in the habit of passing hastily over the less conspicuous parts of the Mass, and taking it for granted that they are of little moment. After reciting the prayer which formed the subject of our last Instruction, the priest takes the host, raises it above the chalice, and breaking it into two equal parts, places one upon the altar ; then separating a small particle from the other, and thrice making the sign of the cross with it over the chalice, he exclaims ; *May the peace of the Lord be ever with you !* He then drops the particle into the chalice, and says ; *May this mixture of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ become for those who receive it a pledge of eternal life.* These words are too plain to need any comment, and I shall only notice them with a view to call your attention to a circumstance attending them, with whose object it is important to be acquainted.

The sacrifice of the Mass being, as we have already observed, a real and effectual continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, and by the ceremonies

which accompany it, an actual representation of the circumstances of this same sacrifice, it follows, that all the principal circumstances which accompanied this visible oblation, must be immediately pointed out by their corresponding ceremonies. Now there are three prominent and remarkable circumstances in the passion of Jesus Christ: his death upon the cross; his abode in the tomb, during which time he descended to carry consolation into those mansions, where the spirits of the just remained the captives of death; and, lastly, his resurrection. We have already endeavoured to impress your minds with the importance of the two former of these mysteries, and we consider it a duty to avail ourselves of the present occasion, for pointing out the connection between this ceremony and the mystery of the resurrection. The resurrection was productive of three effects; which, in some measure, we shall find reproduced in this ceremony of the Mass:—first, the abolition of sin; secondly, the formation of the church; and, thirdly, the application of all the mysteries performed by Jesus Christ during his mortal life.

Let us follow up this parallel, and consider the abolition of sin, which is the first fruit of the resurrection. This, it is true, is the effect of the death of Jesus Christ, but of Jesus Christ at once God and man. This death is a sufficient proof of his humanity, but his resurrection confirms his divinity, and consequently the right which he has over life and death. His death was the signal of

the conflict in which he was engaged with the powers of darkness; his resurrection of the victory which he gained over them. Therefore, my brethren, as Jesus Christ said, while representing his death at the moment of the consecration; *This is my body—this is my blood which shall be shed for you:* in the same manner the priest says, representing his resurrection; *The peace of the Lord be always with you.* To him, therefore, who combats with Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, every conflict shall be crowned with victory, every victory shall be the pledge of our eternal peace. The serpent may still preserve his poison, and death his sting; the enemy of mankind may have lost nothing of his malice, nor sin of its hideous deformity; but the just man, ransomed by Jesus Christ, protected by Jesus Christ, and zealous to unite himself to Jesus Christ, shall enjoy the sweetness of peace even in the midst of conflicts he shall take;—according to the expressive language of the Gospel, he shall take the serpent in his hands without fearing its sting, he shall behold death at his side, without fearing his dart, he shall withstand the assaults of hell without being shaken or appalled; and if, through the weakness of humanity, he should unhappily fall, he will arise with redoubled ardour to the combat, because the risen Jesus is his strength, his defence and his succour.

I also behold the formation of the church in the ceremony we are explaining. This too, my brethren, is the effect of the resurrection of Jesus

Christ, who in a short time shall return to visit and unite all the members of that mystical body which he has acquired to himself upon the cross. I discover this figure in the three portions into which the priest separates the host. One of these is replaced upon the altar:—this is Jesus Christ, who is one by his divine nature, and who, by the efficacy of his sacrifice, continually sheds upon those souls who have preceded us refreshment, light, and peace. The portion elevated upon the chalice, represents this divine Saviour returning to the bosom of his Father, in order to crown the church triumphant in heaven with happiness and glory everlasting. The portion deposited in the chalice, reminds me of the union he has contracted with his church on earth; a union represented by the mixture of water and wine, for this divine Bridegroom forms but one with his spouse. Here, therefore, I may repeat what I professed in the preparation to the sacrifice: ‘I believe in one holy church.’ Yes, I believe it, and this belief is the effect of my faith in Jesus Christ. I believe that I am united to the saints who reign in glory, by the same bonds of charity that unite me to the souls of the just who await their deliverance. I believe that the same blood which Jesus Christ sheds for their relief, has also been shed for my salvation; that he is even now, and shall be eternally, united to all the members whom he has chosen to compose his mystical body; and that the peace of the Lord, which the minister here invokes upon us, is

the consummation of that ineffable union which Jesus Christ is desirous of contracting with me in this his sacrament, and which he promises one day to ratify in heaven. My brethren, I said that I considered the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the substance and epitome of all the other mysteries of his life, and I repeat it, that this ceremony is expressive of what I advanced. I discover his incarnation in the mixture of bread and wine, to which is united that mysterious water, which, as we have shown, is representative of the people; his birth, by the good tidings of peace which he announces afresh by the mouth of the visible angel whom he has chosen for his minister; his circumcision, by the retrenchment made by the priest of part of his adorable body; his manifestation, because he comes forth, as it were, from the awful recesses of the sanctuary, to make known to me that he is the way, the truth, and the life; his presentation, because he here offers himself to his eternal Father as a peace-offering, alone capable of effecting our reconciliation: in fine, his passion, resurrection and ascension are also clearly marked out in this ceremonial. I am not, therefore, surprised, that from the earliest times the church should have considered the observance of this ceremony as one of the most proper to remind us of the many advantages to be derived from this awful mystery. We read in some of the ancient sacramentaries, that in the first ages of Christianity, and particularly during the times of persecution, when the oblation of the

holy sacrifice was more rare, owing to the severe decrees of the Pagan emperors against the assemblies of the faithful, the church permitted the priest to divide the host, that the parts might be sent in token of communion to those, who either by distance of place, or by the vigilance of their persecutors, were prevented from assisting at the celebration of the holy mysteries. Better instructed than ourselves in the object of this ceremony, what motives for confidence must they not have found in receiving this hallowed token of communion and charity ! The feeblest were fortified, the most timid felt encouragement, the most holy found an increase of ardour and sanctity. All around was the rapture of joy and the fervency of devotion ! Each one seemed to hear the voice of the high-priest, or rather of Jesus Christ himself, addressing them in these words ; *The peace of the Lord be always with you* : may it sustain you in the hour of tribulation and alarm, when either your lives or your possessions are menaced by the enemies of the faith. In reward for the sincerity of your faith in me, I am ever with you ; and the exchange which I propose of an eternal for a momentary existence, of an imperishable glory for unsubstantial possessions, ought to soften your hearts into patience and submission. And why should not these same words of consolation make a like impression on our hearts ? Why do we suffer the ills of life to have such influence on our minds as to render us insensible to the consolation they offer ? If we

were truly the children of peace; our hearts would be the abode of peace; and were the enemy to seek at any time to trouble our repose, we should hasten to the foot of the altar to imbibe this peace of the soul at its very fountain.

But remember that what is called the peace of the Lord, is very different from that which the world pretends to offer. The latter is a false peace; it affects a total exemption from tribulations that it can never avoid, and can only be purchased at the expense of justice, while even this sacrifice is unable to insure us its possession. It is therefore the merest chimera, a visionary peace, equally incapable either of mortifying the passions that prey upon the soul, of warding off the dangers that menace our repose, or of pouring the balm of comfort into the wounds of a guilty conscience. She deludes us with the vain hope of enjoying her delights, and then abandons us under the first calamity. O my God, can this be the peace which thou hast commissioned thy minister to announce? Ah! if it were marked by characteristics like these, the prayer of the minister would be nothing better than a kind of curse, instead of a petition for the favours of heaven. Tell us ye justified spirits who have tasted of this peace, and who through the mercy of the Lord are fixed in its eternal possession, tell us what the attractions are which it possesses in the eyes of a faithful soul? Tell us how securely established that peace must be, which sin is unable to disturb, because she has learnt to avoid



her wiles, and fly her contagion ! Tell us how precious you have found her in those moments of bitterness and of spiritual dryness, which she enabled you to support with such patience, while so many other Christians, devoid of religion and faith, would have sunk under their pressure ! It is a daily observation, the justice of which our very enemies are sometimes obliged to acknowledge, that to stand firm amidst certain ills of life and reverses of fortune, requires no inconsiderable share of fortitude and religion : and what can impart this religious fortitude, but the peace of Jesus Christ ? What but this peace could make us discern the finger of God in the varied events of life, his mercy in the chastisements which he inflicts, his adorable designs in the various trials to which in his wisdom he is pleased to subject us ? Oh, *may the peace of the Lord be ever with us !* For of all the privileges of heaven, this is the most tender and consoling ; but the peace of this life, with all these high consolations, cannot render us insensible to pain and woe. It is true that Jesus Christ has acquired it for us by his death, that from the height of the cross he has infused it into our hearts, and that he has ordained that it should daily flow from the altar on which he offers his sacrifice ; but with it also flow some drops of that gall of bitterness with which his cup was mingled ; and till that cup shall be entirely exhausted, the peace of the just cannot be exempt from vicissitudes and conflicts. But since she makes her abode in the hearts of those

who seek and love her, let us wait with confidence till that day, in which Jesus Christ himself shall bring us the tidings of peace. Let us march courageously towards that Jerusalem which is the abode of peace: Let us prepare our hearts to mingle in the canticle of peace, with which the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem shall eternally resound. It is to excite these feelings, to make us sigh after this blessed moment, that the priest greets us with these words of consolation; *May the peace of the Lord be ever with you.* Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER 'HÆC COMMIXTIO.'

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again."

ST JOHN, c. ii. v. 19.

**L**ET us not forget, my brethren, that this prayer to which we alluded in our last Instruction, bears an allusion to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His body and blood, which were in some measure separated at the moment of consecration by the sacramental words, are again united by this mixture of the two species; and Jesus Christ renews the accomplishment of that prophecy which was the most clear and the most striking of all those that he unfolded to his apostles. The temple of his body is again destroyed, and again re-established by the two-fold mystery operated by the church in the sacrifice of her altars. It is under this impression that she has been careful to in-

struct us, that this august sacrifice is offered in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

As we are certain that this part of the Mass is figurative of the mystery of the resurrection, it becomes of all others the most interesting and instructive. My brethren, let us strive to enter fully into its spirit, by meditating with attention on the words that the church has chosen to accompany this mysterious rite: for this purpose favour me with your pious attention.

The prayer which we this day purpose to explain is comprised in a few words. After saluting the people with the peace of the Lord, the priest says in a low tone of voice: *May this mixture and consecration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, be to us that receive it, effectual to eternal life.* We ought then, in the first place, to reflect that this mixture bears an immediate reference to the consecration, and has the same object in view; secondly, that it is the mixture of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; and, thirdly, that this mixture becomes to those that receive it the pledge of everlasting life. Let us examine these points with the attention they deserve.

This mixture, as I before observed, bears an immediate reference to the words of consecration, of which they are in reality no more than a continuation. Accordingly theologians agree in teaching, that the sacramental words pronounced over the bread, equally with those pronounced over the

wine, operate the change of the species of bread into the body, and the species of wine into the blood of Christ. It is equally certain that the blood exists under the species of bread, and the body under the species of wine, by virtue of what theologians term *concomitance*, because the living body of Christ cannot exist without his blood, nor his blood possess the principle of life, unless united to the body ; but it is not less certain, that as by virtue of these words ; *This is my body*, the bread is separately changed into the body of Jesus Christ, so by these other words ; *This is my blood*, the wine is separately changed into the blood. Now it was necessary that there should be some part of the Mass in which the essential union of these two substances should be announced, and this is done in the words now under consideration. Hence it follows, that under whatever species this august sacrament is received, the faithful soul ought firmly to believe that he receives Jesus Christ whole and entire ; that though by the discipline of the church he is restricted to communion under one kind, yet that he receives as really and as completely as the priest who partakes of both species. Such, my brethren, is the motive for this mixture ; let us now study its spirit.

This mixture represents not only the union of the parts that compose the body of Christ, but also the union of all the members that he has associated to himself, the union which he contracted with us, by our adoption in the sacrament of baptism, toge-

ther with the union which we ourselves ought to maintain with our brethren of whatever nation, state, or condition they may be. When, therefore, the priest recites this prayer, let us hasten to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, and, like his, let our union be indissoluble. We may observe, that when this mixture is once made, it can never again be destroyed: a circumstance intended to remind us of the resurrection. ‘ Jesus Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more; death hath no more dominion over him:’ his blood, which was once poured out upon the altar of the cross, can no more be shed but in a mystical manner; this is done in the sacrifice of the Mass, though without separation or division:—a lively image of the charity of a true Christian, of the bond that unites the members to their head, and the faithful to each other. What a striking lesson for a Christian, who ought constantly to bear in mind, that being once united to Jesus Christ, he ought never more to be separated from him by sin; that as often as he follows the dictates of his passions, he gives a mortal wound to his Saviour, by destroying, as far as in him lies, the sacred union of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This gives the great apostle occasion to compare every profaner of these adorable mysteries to the deicides, who conspired against the Lord of life—‘ Again crucifying the Son of God;’ for they only executed in a visible and bloody manner, what the sinner actually per-

petrates, though in a bloodless and apparently less shocking manner.

I add, in the second place, that this is the mixture of the *body and blood of Jesus Christ*, a reflection that leads me to regard this sacred circumstance as figurative of the mystery of the resurrection. Jesus Christ was once to shed his blood; and then to offer it unceasingly to the end of time; he was to pour forth his blood upon the cross, even to the last drop, and to resume it again, in order eternally to present it to his Father, as a pledge of our sanctification. Thus the church, after having poured forth this blood both for the living and the dead, for all necessities corporal and spiritual, restores it, in some measure, to Jesus Christ by the mixture which she makes, in order that the faithful may learn, 'that he ever liveth to make intercession for them,' and that their uninterrupted prayers should be united to his uninterrupted intercession.

Yes, the Christian ought always to pray; it is the precept of Jesus Christ, who in heaven continually exercises this function in our behalf; he there liveth as our 'perpetual intercessor.' In him every thing breathes the eloquence of prayer. That body formed from our substance in the womb of a virgin, exposed for love of us to all the inclemency of the seasons, to all the miseries of hunger and thirst, to all the fatigues of journies and voyages, to all the pains of blows and bruises, to all the tortures of the scourge and the cross—that body, covered with wounds and oppressed with

the weight of our sorrows, pleads incessantly for mercy by as many mouths as there are gaping wounds in his mangled frame. Scarcely does his infant-blood begin to flow through his tender veins, when it is shed by the knife of circumcision: in that mortal agony which preceded the death of the Saviour, this blood forced a passage through all the pores of his body: 'And his sweat became as it were drops of blood.' It soon finds a freer passage through the wounds caused by the thorns, the scourge and the nails; till piercing his sacred side, the lance completed that entire effusion which was effectually to wash our guilty stains away. The blood of Abel, of Zachariah, and of so many other martyred prophets, was infinitely less efficacious in adding lightnings to the arm of vengeance, than the blood of this adorable victim in disarming it of its terrors. For ever—without interruption shall this blood cry aloud in our behalf; 'Spare, O Lord, spare thy people; deliver not thine inheritance to disgrace and confusion.'

Under this impression conceive, my brethren, how great must be the virtue and efficacy of this body and blood united to solicit the same mercy; how great the privileges of that Christian, who wisely fears and cautiously shuns whatever might separate him either from the one or the other; who, after the example of Jesus Christ, makes a continual victim of his body, by the victories he gains over his passions, by the circumspection with which he watches over all his senses; by the mor-

tification he practises to chastise his flesh, and bring it under subjection to his spirit;—of that Christian, whose blood flows but to animate a heart that is pure and irreproachable, a heart that is ever ready to shed the same, whenever the glory of God, the cause of religion, or the duties of charity, shall demand the sacrifice.

What a tender, what a consoling privilege for a Christian to be able, in some measure, to blend himself with Jesus Christ at the moment the priest reunites the two species, and thereby to participate in a mystery, which, at the same time that it presents so striking an image of the resurrection of Christ, so forcibly announces that future resurrection, by which the members of Christ shall be united to their head in a union that shall never be dissolved! It is not without reason, therefore, that the priest terminates the prayer with these words; *May this mixture of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, be to us that receive it, effectual to eternal life.* These last words clearly show, that the mystery of the resurrection is represented in this part of the Mass. That body, which was broken to heal our wounds, that blood, which was shed to wash away our sins, are reunited and assume a new life, in order to insure us the possession of life eternal, and to serve as a rule for that which is to conduct us thither. If, therefore, we can say with truth, that Jesus Christ by his resurrection is become our only model and our only hope, we are equally justified in saying the same



of this hallowed and mysterious mixture. It becomes the two-fold source of a happy life to those that receive it, because it both teaches them to serve God without division or reserve, and assures them of the happiness of loving and possessing him eternally.

In the first place, it teaches them to serve God with an undivided heart. A Christian, who enters into the spirit of this ceremony, will with Jesus Christ address his God in the words of the prophet; 'My soul bless thou the Lord, and let all that is within me praise his holy name!' May my only knowledge be to know him, my only desire to love him, my only will to please him, and may all the energies of my mind tend to this only object—obedience to his precepts. Such was the example given me by Jesus Christ before his resurrection; an example that his resurrection has rendered still more powerfully striking, because the risen Jesus has no further share in what belongs to mortality. He is risen to a life that is purely spiritual. He has left behind him in the tomb every vestige of humanity; he has entirely divested himself of the form of the old man, that he may exhibit nothing but the unfading and immortal features of the new. I know that it is impossible for a Christian perfectly to copy this example of perfect renunciation. But we may regard it as an image of another species of renunciation, which the grace of God can operate in our hearts; that is, the renunciation of ourselves, of our own wills and our dar-

ling inclinations: a renunciation of every thing that passes with time, a detachment from every thing that is perishable, a circumspection in avoiding whatever might contaminate the soul.

A Christian with these dispositions is truly dead with Jesus Christ, buried with Jesus Christ; and, consequently, is entitled to the privilege of rising with Jesus Christ to that spiritual resurrection which consists in walking in the newness of life; to that invisible resurrection from the death of sin—that miracle which shall be renewed to the consummation of ages; to that glorious resurrection, which shall transform our mortal into immortality, and overwhelm our souls with bliss immortal and unfading glory. O thrice happy transformation, worthy of the boundless desires, the tenderest solitudes of our souls, alone capable of requiting all our sacrifices and all our sufferings!

O God, we cannot too often repeat with thy minister; *May this mixture of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be to us that receive it—whether actually or in desire only—effectual to eternal life: to that life where we shall behold him face to face, love him without reserve, praise him with unabated ardour, and possess him without end: Oh, may this body and blood be to us that receive it effectual to eternal life! Amen.*

## ON THE AGNUS DEI.

"Behold the lamb of God!" ST JOHN, c. i. v. 29.

**T**HIS testimony which John the Baptist rendered to Jesus Christ, in presence of all the people who came to hear him and receive his baptism, must have appeared very astonishing to the people of Israel. The prophets, it is true, had often represented the promised Messiah under the emblem of a lamb; yet this carnal race must have been greatly at a loss how to reconcile the magnificent ideas which they had formed of their expected deliverer, with the simplicity of this figure. Better instructed in this respect than the carnal Jews, we, my brethren, so far from being scandalized at this image, acknowledge it as the real character of Him who was immolated for us. We know that he is truly the Lamb that God has chosen to be the only victim of propitiation for offending man, and to inspire him with gentleness and docility. When, therefore, the church invites us to listen to these words, or rather when she invokes Jesus Christ under this endearing qualification, it will not be difficult to comprehend the force of this prayer, or to excite the heart to such sentiments as may render it efficacious. Still it may be useful to consider the relation which this prayer bears both to those that precede and follow it. It forms the commencement of an essential part of the Mass—

the Communion ; and while it serves the priest by way of preparation to this sacred action, becomes in the mouth of the assistants a testimony of humility of heart, and of confidence in Jesus Christ, which, when it springs from the heart, is well calculated to produce such dispositions as suit a preparation to the holy mysteries. Regarding the subject in this point of view, we shall learn to recite the present invocation with the sentiments it requires.

The first mention of this prayer is found to be made about the close of the tenth century : it would appear that its only object at this early period, was to engage the pious attention of the faithful, whilst the priest was occupied in the sanctuary with the prayers and ceremonies we have been endeavouring to explain. The people did not, as at present, wait till the conclusion of these prayers, before they addressed the present invocation to Jesus Christ as the victim for sin. At length this fervent address to the Saviour, as the *Lamb of God*, appeared so interesting both to the flock and the pastor, that while the faithful repeated it with solemn earnestness without, the priest himself recited it within the sanctuary, as one of the best possible exercises for exciting his heart to confidence and humility. This prayer is repeated three times : a practice that the church has always observed respecting such formulas as appeared to her of more than common importance ; it is a burst of ardour, a kind of holy violence that she offers to

the Almighty to obtain the graces for which she prays in the name of her children. This prayer is pronounced by the priest in a bending posture, to denote the sentiments of awe and veneration which it should excite in every heart. He strikes his breast in pronouncing the words; *Have mercy on us*—because he regards his sins as the most powerful motive to excite the tender compassion of Jesus Christ. At the third repetition he seems to change the object, by soliciting peace; *Grant us thy peace*—because the compassion of Jesus Christ is particularly directed to the trouble produced within us by sin; it is he who, by his benign and gracious presence, calms the boisterous fury of the passions, and hushes into repose the tumults of the soul.

In giving this explanation of the ceremonies that accompany the present prayer, one difficulty remains to be cleared up. Why does the church vary this form of prayer, and the ceremonies that accompany it in the Masses which she celebrates for the dead, and instead of the words; *Have mercy on us*, substitute these others; *Grant them eternal rest*? Doubtless with the intention of more especially applying to them the fruit of this sacrifice, and of confining to them alone what on other occasions is extended to the whole body of the faithful. Therefore, instead of demanding peace, which is one of the greatest blessings she can solicit for her children who are engaged in a continual warfare upon earth, she prays for rest, which is truly

the bread of those who are departed this life in the Lord; and those souls, whose purification the Almighty completes in the flames of purgatory, may say with more truth than St Augustine; Our hearts are filled with restlessness and anxiety till they find rest in thee. *Grant them this rest!* exclaims the church; the time of their exile is accomplished, since thou hast separated them from the inhabitants of Cedar; the day is come in which they can no longer work, they are wrapt in that night of gloom which disables them from doing ought towards their relief. Their souls, under the hand of thy justice, experience a distracting perplexity: they are no longer in fear of losing thee eternally, but still they are deprived of thy presence, and their tears will never cease to flow till thine arms are opened to receive them to eternal rest.

It is easy to conceive why the priest omits to strike his breast, when he pronounces these words under such considerations. He seems for a moment to forget his own interests, in order to succour a brother under affliction; he, in some sort, lays down for a moment the burthen of his own sins and miseries to afford relief to him who labours under the weight of divine justice in these abodes of expiation.

Considered in this point of view, it will not be difficult to discover the intention of the church in this prayer, whether it be applied to the dead in the sacrifices offered in their behalf, or employed to excite the faith of her children. But an explanation

of the terms that compose it will enable us more fully to enter into its spirit. It is after the canon, and immediately before the communion, that this prayer is placed:—that is, at the moment Jesus Christ is offered as a victim, and replaces all the sacrifices of the old law. It is, therefore, no longer the oblation of Abraham or Melchisedec, or the sacrifice which Jacob made at the foot of the mysterious ladder; it is no longer the victim of propitiation, the peace-offering, the rites of purification, which Aaron and his sons, together with Phineas and the whole tribe of Levites, were accustomed to offer to the Lord. These were not properly the sacrifices of God, though they were offered to his name. They were the sacrifices of man, who made choice of the victims offered to the Lord; they were the sacrifices of the law, but of a law that was to be abolished; in a word, they were oblations at no time acceptable to the Lord, and even sometimes, through the dispositions of those who offered them, an abomination in his eyes. But the victim which the church presents in the sacrifice of the Mass is truly the sacrifice of God, the oblation of God, *the Lamb of God*: chosen by a God, offered by a God, accepted by a God, alone worthy of a God, alone capable of satisfying a God, and of effecting a reconciliation between him and his offending creatures.

Truly a victim of propitiation in the full extent of the term, he not only expiates and effaces every stain of sin, but also bears the burthen of our

sins: and not only of ours, as the apostle says, but those of the whole world: *Lamb of God who takest away—or, as the words may be rendered, who bearest—the sins of the world, have mercy on us.* He bears them:—yes, he is charged with our sorrows, he is covered with our bruises, and without knowing the pollution of sin, he becomes in some measure sin itself, in order to efface our transgressions. To say, therefore, that he bore the resemblance of sin, would be too weak an expression, in the same manner as it would be impious to assert that he contracted its stain. The apostle makes use of an expression, which, without offering violence to the sanctity of Jesus Christ, admirably well expresses the extent of his charity for us, by saying; ‘that he became sin for us,’ that is—the representative of sin, who was to bear the whole weight of the divine indignation; the pledge for sin, by making an infinite reparation to the offended majesty; the remedy for sin, whose wounds were too deep for aught but the merits of a God to cure.

I can therefore say, with confidence, that he bears the sins of the world, since there has not been a single transgression committed from the beginning of the world, for which he has not made complete satisfaction to his Eternal Father; nay, should the malice of sin reach its utmost height, should the torrent of iniquity rage with its fiercest violence, it can never prevail against the superabundance of his merits and his blood. He bears the *sins of the world*, consequently he is covered with



my wounds, he is laden with the weight of my sins and infirmities. Encouraged by this animating consideration, we can never yield to dejection and despair; and whilst the church exclaims, in the name of all her children; *Have mercy on us*—penetrated with grief at the view of our own infidelities, we too should repeat with fervour; O Lord, thou knowest the dust from which we are formed; thou knowest the weakness of our nature, since thou hast thyself experienced all its miseries; thou knowest the deep enormity of our crimes, since thou hast felt their bitter effects in the pangs of thy passion and death. *Have mercy on us*—show us the same compassion which filled thee with such ardour to undergo the baptism of thy blood, and such patience in draining the bitter cup of humiliation: that compassion which filled thee, when on the cross, with such an insatiable thirst, not after the drink which could afford only a temporary relief, but after the total extinction of all our inordinate desires and disorderly passions. *Have mercy on us*, thou that art the *Lamb of God*; we are the sheep of thy pasture, oh save us from the rage of the wolves that are continually prowling around the fold, to surprise and devour us. Thou who, at once, art the Lamb and the good Shepherd, save us from the blood-thirsty rage of our infernal foe, who joys in the dispersion of thy flock. *Have mercy on us*; for thou hast promised, by thy prophet, to heal the wounded of thy flock, and to strengthen the weak; behold us, the sheep of thy

pasture, stretched at the foot of thy altar, filled with weakness and infirmity. But as if it were not sufficient for thy love to have borne their bruises, thou hast cherished them in thy bosom, warmed them with the fire of thy charity, cheered them amidst their difficulties and distresses, and protected them against the enemies that threatened their destruction. *Have mercy on us* for the glory of thy name, to ensure us the fruit of thy death, to prove that the fruit of thy precious blood has not been shed in vain; that our enemy and thine may not have the presumption to boast that he has prevailed against us; that he may not demand with contempt who the God is that we serve, and what are the proofs of his love towards us? *Have mercy on us*, who are thy members, thy brethren, the co-heirs of thy kingdom, and the children of thy church. Above all, have regard to that state of agitation and alarm in which thy church is constantly placed, and *grant us thy peace*. Like a bark on a tempestuous ocean, she is continually lashed by the billows of persecution; but as we rest on the assurance that storms shall assail her in vain, it is less on her account than our own that we pray for tranquillity and repose. *O Lamb of God, grant us thy peace*;—peace, by protecting us from those enemies that openly attack us by heresies, scandals, blasphemy, and impiety: peace, by furnishing us with arms against those invisible enemies, that are continually laying snares for our conscience, and soliciting us to evil: peace with such of our bre-

themselves as are distracted by the spirit of division and discord ; peace with the wicked, who seek to injure us by their perfidy, their calumnies, and the snares which they spread for our destruction : peace in families, by inspiring subordination, sweetness, and charity : peace among states and empires, by presiding at the counsels of princes : peace in thy church, by causing the light of truth to shine upon her children : in fine, the interior peace of a good conscience.

Thrice happy peace ! which renders us, in some respect, like our Divine Master, since resembling lambs in meekness, we live without fear in the midst of wolves ; like him, we bear the sins and offences of others with charity and patience.

Thrice happy peace ! which calms all our inquietudes, alleviates our sorrows in this place of exile, satisfies the restless desires of the heart, and establishes among the members of thy mystical body, that harmony which is the most endearing and valuable effect of charity.

Thrice happy peace ! which makes even a heaven upon earth, which introduces us, by anticipation, into the celestial Jerusalem, that city of which one of thy saints speaks with a holy enthusiasm, when he says ; That its streets shall resound with nothing but peace, that its heavenly inhabitants shall sing only canticles of peace, that their food shall be peace, that the God who shall there form the delight of his saints, shall be called the God of peace. O divine Lamb, who didst come to bring

peace upon earth, and to effect our peace with heaven, *grant us this peace* both in time and eternity !  
Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER ‘DOMINE JESU CHRISTE,’ AND THE  
KISS OF PEACE.

My peace I leave you, my peace I give you.—ST JOHN, chap. xiv. 27.

**M**y brethren, these few words comprise the most remarkable benefits to be derived from the New Testament; they were addressed by Jesus Christ to his apostles, almost at the moment that this Testament was, according to the expression of St Paul, about to be fully ratified by the death of the Testator. *I leave you my peace*, says he, to be a perpetual subject of consolation during my absence. I leave it you, not as a gift in which I have no interest, but as a blessing purchased with my own blood, and of which I can dispose as from a fund of my own. *I give you this peace*; it is exclusively mine; no one else can impart it, and whatever is not *my* peace, though it bear that name, is only trouble, vexation, and sorrow. I am not surprised that the church should employ these same words in the prayers which she addresses to Jesus Christ before the communion. She has just entreated him to grant her his peace, and founded her prayer upon his mercy and compassion: she now seems to address Jesus Christ on the virtue of his promises; and in the first of the three prayers that follow the

**Agnus Dei**, she rests upon these memorable promises for obtaining the greatest of all blessings. Let us enter more fully upon this prayer, and profit by the sentiments which it inspires.

We may regard this prayer as a continuation of the Lord's Prayer; it is, in effect, an enlargement upon the words—*Deliver us from evil*; for what does the church signify by this peace, but protection from the enemies that attack, and deliverance from the evils that threaten her children? I shall not dwell upon the antiquity of this prayer, which though not found in the ancient Roman missals, has, nevertheless, been used in most churches since the ninth age. Neither shall I repeat what I before said, as to the motives which induced the church to suppress all such prayers in her Masses for the dead, as seemed to have a more immediate reference to the church militant on earth. A mere perusal of the present will, I think, be sufficient to show that it is not applicable to the faithful who are suffering in a place of expiation; that it is needless to solicit protection for them against the enemies of salvation, because, under the hand of God, the infernal foe has no longer any dominion over them. It is equally needless to pray that they may enjoy peace and union one with another: intimately connected by the same sufferings that purify, and the same hopes that support them, they are, in this respect, the model of that union which should exist among Christians, and render them feelingly alive to the woes and necessities of their brethren. Hence we

shall feel no surprise at the constant practice of the church in omitting this prayer in Masses for the dead. It is to ourselves alone that it is truly applicable, and the least attention thereto will discover sufficient motives to animate our faith.

It is to Jesus Christ that this and the two following prayers are addressed; to the same Lamb, whom we regarded in our last Instruction as laden with our iniquities, and in whose mercy we were so solicitous to obtain an interest. We begin by availing ourselves of his own words; *My peace I leave you; my peace I give you*: as if the church thus addressed him; We demand nothing at thy hands, but what thou hast already declared to be ours: thou hast conferred this blessing on us, after having acquired it at the price of thy blood; thou hast left it behind thee as a pledge of the covenant entered into with our nature. Thou hast declared that this peace is exclusively thy gift, and therefore we have sought it only from thee. The world too has its peace to offer; but thou hast assured us, that thou givest not thy peace as the world gives it. Men sometimes attempt to purchase peace with the riches of this world, but unsubstantial as the means by which it is vainly sought to be procured, it quickly eludes the grasp. The peace for which we pray, and which thou alone canst impart, is truly the peace of the heart, the peace of a good conscience. We know that there is no peace for the wicked. It were vain for thy ministers to flatter their people, by fond assurances, that

peace may be found amidst the bustle and the distracting pleasures of this life; 'they may say peace, peace,' but thou hast declared that 'there is no peace.' How, therefore, can we presume to promise it to thy people—we who are sinners, and who pray for men that are sinners like ourselves? Oh, regard not at this moment the multitude of our sins! or if the object of thy sacrifice must needs remind thee of the iniquities thou art come to expiate, remember that they are no longer ours, since thou hast charged thyself with their guilt. Their amount can never exceed thy merits; their enormity can never diminish the value of thy sufferings in the eyes of thy eternal Father. An only Son, obedient unto death, is able to shield from the eyes of divine Justice an infinite multitude of ungrateful and rebellious children, this consideration emboldens us to address the Father in the same language of confidence; *O Lord look not upon our sins*, turn away thine eyes from our numberless acts of disobedience, infidelity and ingratitude, and cast them on thy only begotten Son, the object of thy eternal love; or if thou wilt deign to bestow a look on thy creatures, let *the faith of thy church* claim thy merciful regard. It is by this faith, that through a wonderful effort of his charity, she beholds him in a sensible manner present upon her altars. Even now she beholds the consummation of this mystery, and calls on her children to testify the same firmness of belief with herself. This is the faith of thy church, let it also be ours; oh grant

that it may form our sweetest consolation here below, and never experience the least change or diminution. Should the spirit of darkness overspread our minds with the clouds of doubt, may they be dissipated by the light of thy divine word, by which we are assured, that this is his blood, the blood of the New Testament, by which man was reconciled to his God, and reconciled also to his brethren and to himself. Therefore we pray, that this blood, from which has sprung the one true church, may so perfectly unite the members with the head, that they may form but one and the same body. Grant peace and unity to thy church, for she cannot be truly thy spouse, except she partake of the unity of her divine Master. It is for this reason that she prays thee to purify her from heresy and schism; and if it be for the interest of thy glory that errors and dissensions should still subsist, console her under her losses, and repay the bitterness of her sorrows by the stricter union of her children; that united to their head, they may live by his spirit, walk in the light of his countenance, and form themselves upon his model; that they may be supported by his grace and nourished with his promises; that united to the church their mother, they may profess her faith, obey her laws, participate in her sacraments, and listen with submission to her pastors; that united among themselves, peace may reign in their houses, sweetness upon their lips, truth in their words, justice in their actions, and charity in their hearts: in a



word, that this union may in all respects *be agreeable to thy will*. Then shall thy children seek only to please thee; then shall they fly that union with the wicked, which is only cemented by a community of crimes, those dangerous associations which have only pride, pleasure, or avarice for their basis; they will no longer assist in the councils of sinners, on the contrary, they will make it their delight to associate in the prayers that are addressed to thee, and the canticles that are chaunted to thy honour; to join in the meditations on thy divine truths, to obtain a share in the succours that flow from the hand of thy bounty, and to unite in the resolutions formed, at the foot of thy altar, of loving and serving thee in sincerity and truth. This is truly that unanimity of mind, at the view of which the apostle exclaimed: ‘How pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity.’

Ah, let us never contradict in practice this prayer which the church offers in our name! Must we always merit the reproach which the apostle St Paul made to the Christians of his time—With sorrow I hear that there are quarrels and dissensions among you? Not only may these words be applied to us; but unfortunately more familiar with grievances of this kind than the apostle, our ministers may say with truth, that they are the melancholy witnesses of dissensions that separate the wife from the husband, that embroil families, that set the father against the son, and the brother against the sister, that create a kind of natural an-

tipathy; hence that opposition of temper, that struggle of contradictory inclinations, that shock of jarring opinions, by which Christians live together, as if they had no common interest in their religion, their morals, their hopes, or their God. How can we presume to remind Jesus Christ of the promise made in these words; *My peace I leave you, my peace I give*, while every conversation we hold is a kind of declaration of war, in which each one obtrudes his own opinions, and attacks those of his neighbour, lays snares for the simplicity of his brother, takes advantage of his weakness, magnifies his faults, and treats him with all the rancour of a declared enemy? How can we beseech the Almighty *to turn away his eyes from our iniquities*, while we scrutinize the conduct of our neighbour, in order to torture it into the worst construction, and when no visible defect can be discovered, feign imaginary ones without the slightest evidence or probability? while we sound his most secret intentions, and, if unable to discover that they are evil, are willing to suppose them so; and, fearful lest others should lose sight of his weaknesses, take a pleasure in divulging them, and in painting them to our hearers in the most disadvantageous colours? How can we entreat Jesus Christ to grant us that peace which is most agreeable to his holy will—while the only peace we seek is that which is most conformable to our inclinations, most flattering to our passions, and the least likely to expose us to trial and contradiction? This may

well be called the peace of the world, since that of religion is found in penance, in affliction, in adversity; we are pursuing a shadow, while we suffer that peace which is truly from Jesus Christ to escape from our grasp. And what is the price at which we purchase this unsubstantial peace? why, the law of God is sacrificed, the voice of conscience hushed, the mandates of faith disregarded, as often as the peace of the world is to be purchased on these criminal conditions. Nothing is more common than to hear Christians loud in the praise of this peace of the soul, but should the smallest sacrifice be found necessary, in order to obtain this choicest gift of the Holy Ghost, they soon manifest the dispositions of those of whom the prophet says; That while they have peace on their lips, they have only trouble and agitation in their hearts.

Let us blush at this continual contradiction between our words and our actions. While we pray for the peace of the church, let it be our first concern to solicit it for ourselves, that while enjoying this blessing from without, she may not be torn from within by the disorders and dissensions of her children. Let us seek—according to the expression of one of the prophets, let us seek the peace of Jerusalem; but let us remember that it is only to be attained by righteousness, to be preserved by faith, and to be strengthened by charity; and that it is in vain, according to the remark of one of the Fathers, that we share in the external advantages

of the peace which this holy city enjoys, if our hearts be torn by the internal war of the passions. Let us, therefore, exclaim with earnestness: *O Lord, grant us thy peace!* Quell the violence of desire, the solicitations of concupiscence, that pride which tyrannizes over my heart, that spirit of resentment which wounds, and that restlessness which preys upon its repose; destroy those sins that fill me with confusion; that remorse which torments, and those secret enemies that lay in wait for my soul:—such is the peace that my heart desires. We pray with the same fervency, that God would *grant us unity*: a union both of hearts and wills: of the heart—by charity; of the mind—by an humble submission to the dictates of faith; of the will—by the chearful practice of every good work. Hence this prayer is a direct condemnation of all that tends to divide and disunite the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. With respect to faith, therefore, we should renounce whatever savours of singularity, avoid all unprofitable disputes on the awful dogmas of religion, shun all such speculations on doctrine and morals as are rather curious than useful, and profess with simplicity of heart all that the church teaches, she who is the infallible interpreter of eternal truth. With respect to charity, we ought to keep our minds proof against all prejudice, partiality, and the influence of human respects, being of one heart and mind with those, who bear the same character with us, and have a claim to the same happiness.

As far as in us lies, we should appease every quarrel, prevent every dissention, soften every injury, and contribute to the diffusion of that harmony, which alone can render the church upon earth a rival and image of that in heaven.

In fine, we should render our will conformable to that of Jesus Christ, and consequently repress that self-will, which is the most dangerous of our enemies; did this disposition but subsist among the faithful, the happy result would be, a perfect harmony in the practice of all Christian virtues. Goodness would be practised with a holy emulation, unalloyed by jealousy; vice would be combated with zeal, unalloyed with bitterness or rancour; the duties of piety would be discharged with fidelity, untainted with hypocrisy; charity to the poor would, in particular, be exercised with sensibility, unmingled with harshness or ostentation. All Christians would meditate with assiduity on the same law, fulfil with fidelity the same duties, and walk with unanimity in the same path that conducts to true happiness here, and to bliss eternal hereafter.

My brethren, before we close this Instruction, it may be proper to call your attention to a ceremony observed at all Solemn Masses, which, both from its antiquity, and from the object which the church proposes therein, is entitled to your veneration, and may furnish us with some very salutary reflections:—I mean the kiss of peace.

‘Salute each other,’ says the apostle St Peter,

‘salute each other with a holy kiss :’ doubtless these words mark the origin of this ancient practice. St Augustine speaks of it as being of apostolical tradition. ‘After the Lord’s Prayer,’ says this father, ‘the priest repeats, Peace be with you ! and the Christians salute each other with a mutual kiss. As this salutation is given in token of peace, let the heart be in unison with these expressions of love ; and while you approach your brother with your lips, Oh, beware that your heart is not estranged from him !’ This reflection of the holy doctor is full of instruction, inasmuch as it both points out the ceremony and the motives for its establishment. After thus addressing Jesus Christ in the prayer which himself has taught us ; *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ;* after having solicited for themselves the blessing of peace, the Christians turned to each other, and said ; *Peace be with you !*

Such is the antiquity of this ceremony, let us now consider the different motives that have induced the church to enforce its observance among her children. The practice of the early ages seems to have been as follows :—the Christians, at this part of the Mass, rose from the foot of the altar, where they had lain prostrate, and turning, saluted each other with a holy kiss, at the same moment repeating that wish, which the tenderest charity dictated ; *Peace be with you !* Till the thirteenth century, this custom underwent no variation. In those days of fervour, they had not yet learned to

turn a ceremony, which had brotherly love for its object, and the love of God for its end, into a subject of raillery, and to profane it by dispositions still more criminal. The discretion of our fathers suggested the wisest precautions on this subject; the two sexes being kept entirely apart in their churches, could afford no subject for detraction or scandal. But, alas, how widely have we deviated from the simplicity of our forefathers! How languid and inanimate has the piety of these latter times become! 'This tender and affecting ceremony is now, in general, confined to the minister and his assistants at the altar. Bending, the priest kisses the centre of the altar—the spot on which the host reposes,—that he may imbibe this peace in its very source, in the heart of Jesus, whose every word and action bespoke peace, whose blood is to those who receive it worthily, the very principle of peace. He then turns to the deacon, and salutes him with these words; *Peace be with you*; after which the same salutation passes to the sub-deacon and the other assistants. *Peace be with you*: consoling words! which, the moment they are pronounced, should fire the bosoms of all present; for, though not admitted to share in the exterior part of this ceremony, we ought no less fervently to join therein in our hearts.

But, why has the church placed this ceremony immediately after the Lord's Prayer, and before the communion? The Christian who is well instructed in the spirit of this prayer, and in the dis-

positions which this most august of all the sacraments requires, will easily discover the relation that exists between this token of peace, and the objects it has in view. In this circumstance, the priest is an image of the common Father of the faithful, whom he has just invoked, and who, from the seat of his glory in the heavens, watches over his children; he manifests the same tender compassion, he prepares them for the same kingdom, he divides the same bread among them, he pardons the same acts of ingratitude and revolt, he reconciles them to each other by the same charity, he defends them from the same evils, both corporal and spiritual, provided they become one heart and soul with him, in the same manner as they form but one and the same mystical body in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to announce in the name of the Father of mercies; *Peace be with you!* is the same as to assure them that their vows are heard, and that this God, so rich in mercies, will recompense them beyond their utmost wishes, provided they remain faithful to the engagements which they make in his presence. But, as this token of peace is of itself but a feeble pledge of the promises which the priest makes in his name, the sacrament of peace, the pacific victim is about to be offered, that, by receiving it, they may, in some measure, nourish themselves with peace, that it may be incorporated with them; that it might banish from their hearts whatever might tend to alter or destroy it; and consequently exclude all hatred and resentment,



all jealousy and prejudice, the germ of every passion, and every desire repugnant to thy law.

I shall not dwell upon the motives that induced the church to drop this ancient custom, of giving and receiving the kiss of peace. That decency, order, and profound recollection, which become the house of God, joined to the visible decay of primitive simplicity among her children, are sufficient motives to justify the propriety of her conduct. But let us not, therefore, imagine that we are dispensed with interchanging this holy kiss, at least in spirit, by praying for the welfare of our brethren, by forgiving their offences against us, and treating their weaknesses with indulgence. Figure to yourself Jesus Christ speaking, at this moment, from the altar, and addressing these words to the faithful, by the mouth of his minister ; ‘ If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother ; and then come and offer thy gift.’ Does not he, therefore, who presumes to assist at the altar with a heart embittered by hatred and envy—does he not act in contradiction to this formal precept ? Will it not rise up in judgment against him, and denounce this anathema on his head ? Go, thou art a stranger in these abodes of peace ; a stranger to Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace ; to the faithful, who are united in the bonds of his holy peace ; to thyself, who hast been sanctified by the sacrament of reconciliation and peace.

And here a reflection presents itself of an alarming nature to him who should presume to assist at the holy sacrifice, with dispositions inimical to this peace. The priest kisses the altar, which is an image of Jesus Christ ; formerly he kissed the chalice, and the host itself, that, as I before observed, he might imbibe this peace at its very source. This kiss given to Jesus Christ, and received by Jesus Christ, is given and received in our name ; for, at the altar the priest stands between God and us, in the twofold character of his and our minister ; both as the ambassador of God and the representative of man. Have you an adequate idea of the importance of the functions he thus exercises in our behalf ? Shall we presume to draw nigh to Jesus, salute him with a kiss, and implore his peace, yet at the same time refuse the same to a brother, who is less guilty than ourselves, less unworthy of obtaining it ? Is it too much to compare this crime to that of the perfidious disciple ? By no means ; we are even more guilty than he, since even in the days of his glory, we renew an outrage against Jesus Christ, which he experienced from his ungrateful apostle only in the days of his humiliation and sufferings. Have we not more than once repeated this outrage ; and do we not, by neglecting to examine our heart upon the great duty of fraternal charity, daily, though perhaps unknowingly, expose ourselves to the danger of being accounted guilty of this crime ? We are but too apt to imagine that we enjoy interior peace, and punctually discharge

all its duties towards our neighbour, if, on entering into ourselves, we find our minds exempt from the will to render evil for evil, and oppose injury to injury, and our hearts unaffected by that secret and malignant joy, which a spirit of vengeance inspires at the sight of a fallen enemy. We think it quite sufficient to affect a certain moderation in speaking of those who have offended us, but do we not resemble those sinners whom the prophet describes in these words ; ‘ They speak peace with their neighbour, while evil is in their hearts ? ’ Yes, we become like to them, as often as we are careless in guarding our hearts against prejudice, coldness, indifference, and contempt, towards those who have offended or injured us. The church, with solemn earnestness, addresses all her children in these words ; ‘ *Peace be with you !* ’ We must not qualify the indulgence granted to our brethren by any restrictions, if we expect the same generous return from Jesus Christ. Genuine charity is a stranger to all compromise, to all undue respect of persons : concealed revenge is often more dangerous, and more heinous in the sight of God, than open and undisguised vengeance.

My brethren, why cannot I enlarge upon this pleasing theme ! the subject is inexhaustible. Like that precept, of which the apostle of charity continually reminds his disciples, this point of morality might, if faithfully observed, be of itself sufficient for the Christian. I conclude by addressing you in the words of St Augustine ; ‘ I could wish,’ says that holy father, ‘ I could wish to speak to

you of nothing but peace, to recommend nothing but peace, and to see you indissolubly united in its bonds here, under the cheering assurance, that it will conduct you to eternal felicity hereafter.'—Amen.

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ON THE PRAYER 'DOMINE JESU CHRISTE,' &c.

'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. chap. viii. 35.

**W**E should, like the apostle St Paul, possess the faith of a martyr, to be able to say with the same confidence; 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' As for us, whom the humbling sense of our own weakness should fill with distrust and confusion, we may, and ought, to speak a different language. The church points out the obligation of so doing in the prayer which it is our present purpose to explain. She instructs us to pray, that the union which Jesus Christ proposes to contract with us by the participation of his adorable body, may be permanent; that no enemies, visible or invisible, no evils, present or to come, may ever produce, what would be the worst of miseries,—separation from him. Let us meditate with attention on the first of the two prayers which the church has consecrated as a preparation for the holy communion. Though the object of this, as of the preceding prayer, is to dispose us for the same action, yet it places this action in a new point of

view, which may furnish matter for fresh reflections; and would to God, that as often as we recite it, we were animated with a living faith, and felt zealous to enter perfectly into its spirit ! The force of habit, and a certain routine, would no longer render those expressions insipid, which the spirit of religion has dictated as well for our consolation as for our instruction.

As the intention of the church in the two prayers that immediately precede the communion, is to inspire the faithful with suitable dispositions for receiving the adorable sacrament, we must, in order to comprehend it fully, consider them relatively to the particular circumstances in which they are employed. It is true, that all the prayers of the Mass, and especially those that follow the consecration may be regarded as preparatory to the consummation of the sacrifice; yet these two prayers may be considered as expressive of the immediate dispositions which this august sacrifice requires. Therefore it is no longer to God the Father—to a God of infinite holiness and majesty, nor to the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier that these prayers are immediately addressed: not that the church separates the three adorable Persons in the vows and prayers offered to the Divinity in this holy sacrifice; by no means, she only addresses herself in the present prayers in a more special manner to the person of Jesus Christ. How then are we to address our divine Redeemer—or rather how does she teach us to address him, when we assist at this

awful oblation? especially when authorized by our pastor to present ourselves at the altar to receive the adorable victim. Let us enter feelingly into the sentiments with which our holy mother the church seeks to inspire us as often as we approach this divine banquet.

*O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God*—such is the quality under which she regards him, as being the most proper to interest the eternal Father in our behalf, and the best calculated to excite our hearts to respect and confidence. He is the Son of the living God, equal to his Father in wisdom, goodness, and power; eternal like his Father, though formed in the fulness of time in the womb of a virgin, and, in some degree, reproduced at this moment by the ministry of the priest; immense as his Father, though contained in these humble elements, and veiled under this mean appearance; glorious as his Father, though reduced by an astonishing effect of his love to this state of humiliation, and destined, perhaps, by the abuse which sinners make thereof, to experience the most ignominious outrages; in a word, like his eternal Father the author of life, and yet devoted in this sacrifice to continual immolation. Such is the God whom the church invites us to adore with her! But these are titles capable of exciting our veneration, let us now consider the motives that should animate our confidence. Though he is the Son of God and equal to his Father, yet, by reason of his obedience, he is become his servant. *It is according to*

*the will of his Father*, that he has operated every thing in the order of salvation. The same will determined the time, the place, and the circumstances of his incarnation. The same will influenced all the actions of his mortal life; the moment of his humiliations, his sufferings, and his sacrifice, had been marked out in the decrees of his eternal Father; the oblation which he makes of himself on the altar is an act of unceasing submission to this absolute will. And as the will of the Father is always holy, always merciful, always influenced by his love for mankind, it is *through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost*, the spirit of charity, that all his actions are directed. The same divine Spirit, who from the blood of the purest of virgins, once formed the most holy of the children of men, still, by the hands of the priest, forms the most holy and the most excellent of victims. Thus this great mystery is the work of the Father who demands, of the Son who operates, and of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies it; it is also the continuation of the mystery of the cross, where a God *by his death hath given life to the world*. Astonishing prodigy! a God dies, and the world receives life; the handwriting which stood against a sinful world is nailed with him to the cross. Well may we now exclaim: ‘O grave where is thy victory, oh death where is thy sting?’ That thou mayest never forget thy complete overthrow, each day, nay, a thousand times a day, the same sacrifice is renewed, and produces the same memorable effects. This

renewal of death operates, in some degree, a renewal of life. Fresh victims of death are daily raised to life by virtue of this saving sacrifice. The will of the Father that the sinner should not perish but live, this merciful will is punctually executed. Ever renewing his obedience, the Son is unceasingly immolated; ever renewing his sanctifying influence, the Holy Spirit continually applies the merits of the sacrifice. I have reason to exclaim with the most patient of men; ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that in the last day I shall rise out of the earth;’ I have the most solid proof and the surest motives for this confidence, in the mystery of which I am about to partake. Yes; as often as I assist at the holy sacrifice, I, in some measure, behold Jesus Christ die and rise again; die for my sins, and rise again for my justification. By his death I behold my transgressions daily effaced, and my reconciliation with God daily renewed. In this mystery I have, therefore, a never-failing pledge of the death of sin, and my resurrection to the newness of life. O death, a thousand times more precious than a life of the greatest delights! O happy life! O glorious resurrection, alone worthy of all my hopes and all my desires! Such are the blessed effects of the sacrifice which Jesus Christ, daily renews in my regard, and *by which he hath given life to the world.*

Full of this holy confidence I will exclaim; *Deliver me, O Lord!* Already hast thou broken my chains, by applying to my soul the fruits of thy



sacrifice in the sacrament of baptism; but the infernal tyrant whom thou hast led in captivity captive, that roaring lion from whose ravenous jaws thou hast snatched me; that strongly armed one, whom thou hast stripped of his spoils, still lies in wait for my soul. Accompanied by other spirits more wicked than himself, he often seeks to surprise us, we therefore call upon thee to *deliver us*. Thy body, to him more impenetrable than the cloudy pillar which of old separated the Egyptian host from the people of Israel, to me more luminous than the splendid side which guided thy favoured nation, shall place between my enemies and me an interval which they shall never be able to pass. Like the red sea thy precious blood shall prove a barrier of defence to me, but them it shall overwhelm in utter destruction. Thy enemies shall be mine: like thy chosen race I will renounce all the false delights of Egypt—the honours, riches, and pleasures of this life. I will look upon every one as a slave who can basely submit to hug his chains, thrice happy to feel myself free from the *bondage of my iniquities*. Should my life here below appear a sad exile, a weary pilgrimage, a long and painful journey; like thy people I will, with eager hope, look for aid to the land that is promised to those who follow thee with cheerfulness. In these dispositions I shall not fail, even in the desert of this life, to meet with such consolations as are reserved for those who love thee. If my soul is desolated with a spiritual dryness, with

a disrelish for the exercises of devotion, thy sacrament shall prove that living source whose waters spring up even to life eternal. If like the Amalekites that harassed thy people, my passions rise in open rebellion, I will raise my hands towards this saving sacrament; for if thou but strengthen my arm to combat, I shall assuredly come off victorious. If hunger devour me, and my soul be ready to faint through want of nourishment, I shall here find that delicious manna, whose sweetness surpasses all the conceptions of sense. Should thy justice permit the old serpent to lance his poisoned sting and inflict some wounds to cure my pride; in this mystery I shall find a healing remedy, since it is thy sacrifice alone that gives a value to all the sacraments, and is capable of protecting us from the *many evils* that threaten on every side.

Here I shall acquire that fidelity, which makes the meditation of thy precepts its continual study, and the practice of thy law its continual delight. Grant, that by virtue of this sacrament, *I may always adhere to thy commandments*. Grant that my mind may testify its obedience by submitting without cavil or dispute, my heart by loving them as they deserve, my will by observing them with punctuality, and my body itself by conforming to whatever is enjoined. Above all, may I from this source derive an abundant supply of charity, and as in loving thine own, thou hast loved them to the end, grant that we may love thee without interruption or re-

serve; may I love thee notwithstanding the rigour which thy justice exercises in my regard; may I love thee as well in prosperity as in adversity, as well in time of health as of sickness and infirmity; may I love thee with the same tenderness with which thou hast first loved me, even so far as to lay down thy life for my welfare; may I love my neighbour in thee and for thee, since this is the first and the greatest of thy commandments. I am about to unite myself to thee in thy sacrament—or rather thou art about to incorporate me with thyself. Then shall I live by thy spirit, imbibe a portion of thy divine nature, and form but one with thee, as thou formest but one with thy eternal Father and the holy Spirit. Thou art about to create within me a new heaven and a new earth. A new heaven—since all that is within me shall pay thee the same homage that is rendered by all that is in heaven; every thing within me shall, with one accord, unite with thy blessed spirits in adoring and praising thy holy name. My very bones shall thrill with joy and exclaim; O God of all goodness, who is like unto thee! my heart and my flesh shall acknowledge with transport, that it is the living God who dwells within them. Methinks, at that moment, I shall hear every creature thus congratulating me; ‘The holy one of Israel is in the midst of thee.’ O ineffable union, which the heart may feel, but the tongue cannot utter! The spouse of my soul, to render it a fit habitation for himself, has invested it with his richest ornaments; he

comes to take possession thereof, as of the nuptial couch which he has prepared for himself. He shall sanctify me by his grace, enrich me with his gifts, overshadow me with his wings, conduct me by his wisdom, defend me by his might, inebriate me with his joys, and crown me with his glory. My soul, taste and see how sweet the Lord is, how bountiful to those who love him, how rich in the dispensations of his mercy ; but content not thyself with a transitory taste of his sweetness, for of all misfortunes the most dreadful would be to violate so holy an alliance, and divide so tender an union. *O Lord, never suffer me to be separated from thee !*

Let me not one day be doomed to hear that bitter reproach ; Thou hast forsaken me who art the fountain of living waters, and hast sought to quench thy thirst in broken cisterns filled with slime and infection. I shall not fail to meet with enemies jealous of my happiness ; they will lay in wait for me on my quitting thy holy table, to surprise and allure me from thy service ; they will address me in the language of those sinners whom the scripture describes, and say ; ‘ Come with us ;’ but do thou inspire me with the same fidelity testified by the Prince of the apostles, when he exclaimed ; ‘ Lord to whom shall I go, for thou hast the words of eternal life ?’ Attach me to thyself by the bonds of a love that is stronger than death ; then will I boldly defy hell and all its artifices, the world and all its allurements, affliction in all its

most trying moments, nay death itself with all its terrors, *to separate me from thee.*

May every thing within me proclaim that I belong exclusively to thee, that I live by thy spirit, that I am enlightened by thy truth and animated by thy charity; that thy humility is my rule, thy law my guide, and thy cross my delight; and like thy apostle may I confidently say, that I bear thy marks in my body, by mortification and penance. How consoling the thought to live but for thee! on the contrary, how afflicting the idea to be estranged from thee after enjoying an union of so intimate and endearing a nature!

Behold here a feeble sketch of the sentiments inspired by this prayer, which the priest pronounces both in his own name and in that of the whole church. A heart truly animated at the awful moment of the communion would expatiate far more largely on its contents, because it would feel them more sensibly: Jesus Christ, who delights to sanctify such souls as he honours with his presence, speaks within their hearts a language far more energetic and endearing.

Hence we find, that at an earlier period the church had not admitted these two prayers into her liturgy, but indulged both her ministers and the faithful with liberty to speak from the abundance of the heart, and pour out their souls before Jesus Christ in such expressions as their feelings dictated. This accounts for that great diversity of prayers which is found in many of the sacramen-

taries; yet however varied the style, they all breathe the same spirit; they all bespeak the same humble confidence, the same lively gratitude towards Jesus Christ, the same salutary fear of approaching the altar without the necessary dispositions, or of undervaluing the greatness of the benefits conferred. Sometimes, therefore, let us allow our hearts to pour out without constraint their feelings of gratitude and love to Jesus Christ; and when we avail ourselves of these words to excite our hearts to these generous dispositions, let us not forget, that the same blood of Jesus, which is our life in this sacrament, is also the pledge of a blissful immortality. Amen.

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#### ON THE PRAYER PERCEPTIO, &c.

“He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself.” 1 Cor. c. ii. v. 29.

**T**Hese words which I apply to the prayer immediately preceding the communion, may seem rather calculated to depress than to animate the confidence of the Christian. Till now we have regarded the holy Eucharist as a sacrament of love on the part of Jesus Christ, and as a bond of charity to him who receives it. Why then dwell upon the consideration of the dangers that await a communion made without preparation or devotion—is this to enter into the views of our loving Redeemer, and to correspond with the gracious advances he

makes towards his creatures? Yet if we neglect this examination, how shall we have the assurance to join the priest in the words that compose this last prayer? In the minister they bespeak a just and salutary fear, while they tend to inspire the faithful with the same happy disposition. But when this fear has no other foundation than humility, when this dread is attempered with confidence, so far from extinguishing the ardour of a Christian, and that hunger which is necessary to give a relish for this divine food, it serves but to render it more keen and active. Detained for some time at the foot of the altar by this just timidity, he neither raises a presumptuous eye, nor stretches a daring hand towards the ark of the Lord. After using every effort both to prevent and to remedy the disorders of his soul, his conscience whispers accents of consolation, and encourages him to entreat his merciful Saviour to supply all that is deficient in the dispositions of his heart. By dwelling attentively on every expression of the present prayer, we shall endeavour to convince you of its efficacy, and the practical use that may be made thereof. My brethren, to a subject of such importance, I entreat your serious attention.

The most cursory view of the various prayers preparatory to the consummation of the august sacrifice of our altars, will be sufficient to show that the great object of the church therein is to lay a foundation of sincere humility. More than once we have seen her reminding her ministers of the neces-

sity of dwelling upon their negligencies and infidelities : in the very last prayer, she exhorted them to entreat that no fresh sins might destroy the union they had contracted with Jesus Christ. Is not all this sufficient both to awaken them to impressions of salutary fear, and inspire them with sentiments of confidence and humility ? We know that it is but too natural for man to lose sight of his habitual unworthiness ; that especially in what makes but little impression on the senses, nothing is more easy than to deceive himself in the very dispositions of his own heart ; the church, therefore, has deemed it necessary to call his attention to this subject in a third prayer still more forcible than the rest. As this prayer is short, we will give it you entire, that none of the instructions it contains may be overlooked.

‘ Grant, O Lord Jesus Christ, that the participation of thy body, which I, though unworthy, presume to receive, may not turn to my judgment and condemnation ; but through thy mercy may prove a safeguard and remedy both of soul and body.’ These ideas are simple ; and by this method of prayer the church instructs us, that the Almighty is neither moved by many words, nor by well-chosen and elaborate expressions ; and that when we pray ineffectually, we have rather to blame the depravity of our hearts, and the apathy of our feelings, than any deficiency of understanding. What can be more energetic than the expressions which the church puts in the mouth of



her ministers at the moment of the communion ; *Grant O Lord Jesus Christ?* It is therefore to Jesus that we apply for whatever can be found acceptable in his sight. Indeed, what would be our condition should he abandon us to our own helplessness, and leave us to frame by our own efforts those dispositions of humility, love, and devotion, which he requires of all who are invited to his table? That listlessness we experience in our daily prayers, that distaste which renders our greatest solemnities and our most affecting rites cold and insipid, that spirit of levity, and dissipation of mind, which never appears more sensibly than in those moments when we endeavour most to recollect ourselves—every thing proves, that when left to ourselves, we have nothing to offer to Christ but hearts filled with apathy and enslaved by self-love. Do thou, therefore, O Lord Jesus, do thou form these dispositions in our hearts. Thou knowest, that without the aid of thy grace we are incapable of forming a single good and holy desire : O ! grant, therefore, that I may not receive thy adorable body as one of those corporal aliments, which, as it is taken through necessity, is but little desired and less regretted, and which, as it may easily be replaced by other more palatable food, is received with fastidious indifference. The food which I receive in thy adorable sacrament, contains all that the heart can desire, all that can fill the vast capacities of the soul, all that can satisfy her wants and repair her strength. This incor-

ruptible aliment, prepared for me in the days of eternity, forms the consolation of my exile and the pledge of everlasting life; to feed thereon, is to anticipate here below the delights of eternity.

Encouraged by thy mercies, and incited by the ardour of my desires, I at this moment *presume to receive* this divine nourishment : and since thou hast thyself commanded us to eat this bread, and drink of this cup, I will silence the interior voice of my conscience, which, though purified in thy blood, still feels itself deficient in the sanctity which this sacrament requires. From the moment I first prostrated myself at the foot of thy altar, a thousand distractions have harassed my mind ; a crowd of impertinent thoughts, of objects which I abhor, of desires which I strive to keep in subjection, of recollections which I am solicitous to banish, crowd upon my imagination, and fill my soul with confusion. I wish to be with thee alone, and I am not with myself. My mind, like that of the prophet, is far from me at the moment I desire to fix its inconstancy, and consecrate it to thee, nor will it return at my call : *Spiritus vadens et non rediens*. Still relying on thy word, which has been announced to me by thy minister, *I presume to receive* this adorable sacrament.

O good Lord, let not my confidence and docility be accounted as rashness and presumption ! I have heard the invitation addressed to me by the mouth of thy minister ; ‘ Take, and eat ; this is my body.’ Durst I cast even a look thereon, much less presume to approach it with my lips, if I thought

it would turn to my condemnation? But, O God of goodness! I know thou wilt not permit it: From the bottom of my heart I denounce anathema against him who shall sacrilegiously presume to receive thee into a heart defiled with sin, into a soul still enslaved to the passions, and who, between his crimes and the altar, has placed nothing but the barrier of a deceitful or superficial confession. Let the child of perdition 'eat and drink judgment to himself,' let him find eternal death in the very pledge of everlasting life: how can I be surprised, when I see him crucify thee again in his heart, trample under foot the blood of the new covenant, and betray thee by the most treacherous of kisses? But to him whom a religious fear induces to try himself, to seek in the sacrament of penance a remedy for the mortal disease which subjected his soul to the power of Satan, or, at least, for that habitual apathy to the things of God which springs from the weakness of nature;—to him who sincerely abhors whatever is displeasing to thee, who studies to conform to thy law, and walk in thy footsteps, it shall prove a blessed pledge of eternal life. Grant, O divine Jesus, that such may be my dispositions, that thy sacrament may not be perverted to my condemnation, but may be available to the health of my soul, as our daily nourishment is to the health of the body. The more I reflect on the necessities of my soul, the stronger is my desire after this divine food: my strength is exhausted, but, thou canst restore its languid powers; my

soul is harassed with temptations, oppressed with affliction, and filled with desolation ; shouldst thou abandon it, it would languish and die. It is this bread for which I hunger, that can alone restore its wonted health and vigour. This heavenly bread has the power to nourish and strengthen the soul ; it imparts a second youth, and endows it with a supernatural ardour. ‘ It is not the bread,’ says St Augustine, ‘ that is changed like other aliments, but our nature that is changed into the bread.’ The blood of Jesus Christ flows in our veins, the substance of his body is incorporated with ours, our mind is animated and influenced by the spirit of his Almighty mind. The Christian who is nourished with this divine body, is identified with Jesus Christ, lives the life of Jesus Christ, speaks the language of Jesus Christ, and performs the actions of Jesus Christ. Such—if my coldness and negligence counteract not its merciful purpose—such are the effects produced by this divine sacrament : and what longing desires should we not feel, to experience those blessed effects ! Such, O my God, is the means which thy inventive charity has devised for our consolation here below ! Thou didst visit thy people of old by the consoling promises of the prophets ; but this was only the dawn of that day which was to break upon us in unclouded lustre. Thou deignedst to come among men, and hold converse with thy creatures ; but this was only the commencement of thy mercies. The measure of thy love to man was commensurate with thy obe-

dience to thy eternal Father ; it induced thee to submit even unto death, and to the death of the cross ; yet this was neither the term nor the completion of thy favours—thy tender mercy had other graces, other benefits still in store for us. It behoved thee to return to thy Father to fulfil, on his right hand, the function of advocate and perpetual intercessor ; but it also behoved thee to remain among us even to the consummation of ages, to be our constant comforter and protector. What new prodigy of ingenious love could conciliate these two opposite functions ? What, but the institution of the holy eucharist ? that mystery of love whereby thou art enabled to abide, at the same time, both on earth and in heaven ; whereby thou disclovest thyself to the faithful, both as a visible and an invisible God ; whereby the heavens are, in some measure, bowed down to us, and we are raised even unto heaven. O prodigy of love ! O master-piece of charity !

Protected beneath the shadow of thy altar, what shall I henceforth fear ? This sacrament is placed as a buckler between me and my enemies ; as a wall of brass against the torrent of iniquity that encompasses me on every side ; as a place of refuge against the just indignation of an offended God. Worn out with the combats she is obliged to sustain, my soul repairs to thy altar to recruit her powers, and supply herself with fresh weapons of defence ; if the warfare is continual, the succour, too, is unfailing ; if fresh temptations daily ha-

rass, and fresh infidelities afflict her, thy adorable sacrament affords the means of a daily renewal of her vigilance and faith, and a daily remedy for her wounds and infirmities. How often, when assailed by her powerful and insidious foes, when on the point of experiencing all their rage and malice, has she cried aloud to thee; O, my Saviour, I will fly and rest beneath the shadow of thy wings! There I shall find that repose which will be rendered doubly sweet by the consoling idea of its affording a sure protection to my innocence, and a support under every trial. My very body, oppressed beneath the weight of its infirmities, and subjected by the sad condition of its nature to pain, sickness, and the danger of death itself, shall find herein a species of consolation proportioned to its necessities. Animated by a lively faith, I may here expect with confidence the cure of its infirmities, and that in a manner no less miraculous than the many cures performed by our Saviour during his mortal life. A woman was fearful of having offended him, by merely touching the hem of his garment; yet he permits me to touch his adorable body, to feed on his sacred flesh, and drink his precious blood; may I not, therefore, when labouring under any infirmity, say to him with confidence; 'O Lord thou canst heal me!' Yes, he can and will heal me, if he sees that the health of my body is expedient for the good of my soul. But should he foresee that the continuation of my maladies may contribute to my penance and the expiation of my

sins, he will relieve me, if not by a perfect cure, at least by imparting fresh strength and courage to support them with becoming fortitude ; if the relief he affords be temporary, still it will be consoling to my weakness ; it will teach me to look forward with eager hope to a glorious resurrection. Like thy apostle, I will continue to drag along my body in that state of ignominy, suffering, and corruption which is suited to its nature, confident of beholding it raised up, by virtue of this sacrament, impassable, incorruptible, and clothed with glory ; because this heavenly bread is *the safe-guard and remedy both of soul and body.*

How perfectly was this charitable physician acquainted with the full efficacy of these saving remedies, when he said ; ‘ Come to me all you that are heavily laden, and you shall find rest for your souls !’ Yes, I will fly to thee, sweet Saviour, to seek a remedy for all my evils. If afflictions overwhelm me with bitterness and dejection, I will hasten to pour out all my sorrows before thee ; to unite all the sacrifices I make of my own will and feelings to thy adorable sacrifice ; to seek, in thy love, an ample recompense for all the painful self-denials, for all the humiliations, all the calumnies, all the treachery and ingratitude, I am doomed to experience. Hence, ye desponding consolers, who, amidst all my tribulations, have nothing to offer but motives of human consolation, often as cheerless and discouraging as the evil itself ; fortunately here I need not your assistance to discover the true

remedy for my miseries. Should the commerce of the world sometimes make an undue impression on my heart ; if, by hearing the language of the passions, my own are awakened ; if, in some unhappy moments of weakness or negligence, I have participated in their malice and corruption ; if, in spite of the succours of faith, the world should sometimes have triumphed over my innocence, I will hasten without delay to bewail my misery at the foot of thy minister, to purify myself in the waters of penitence, and in the blood of the spotless lamb. To recover the graces I have unhappily lost, I will come and eat of that heavenly bread which endues us with strength and resolution in our pilgrimage through the desert of this life ; I will drink of that wine which imparts purity and innocence, and which, when mingled with the oil of grace, is a perfect remedy for all the wounds of my soul.

Men of the most consummate skill in the medical art, sometimes apply remedies which prove dangerous or ineffectual ; they are often deceived in the application of the secrets of their art, and not unfrequently are obliged to acknowledge themselves ignorant of the cause of our infirmities. Here I have nothing to apprehend, either from the inefficiency of the remedy, or from want of skill in the physician who administers it. However multiplied, however inveterate, however dangerous the diseases of my soul, it is on the blood that flows upon our altars that my health and safety depend. If my wounds are deep, the Lamb is the searcher of



hearts, he is the light that visits Jerusalem and penetrates into its most darksome recesses. If my wounds, like those of thy prophet, are grown old and festering with corruption, he is the good Samaritan who shall pour therein the oil of his grace, mingled with the wine of penitence and charity. The sinner, therefore, who comes with a contrite and humble heart to bewail his sins at the feet of this victim of mercy, far from being rejected, *shall find a remedy* for all his diseases.

Moreover, even were my infirmities not of a mortal kind; were I only touched with those lighter wounds which neither deprive the soul of life, nor the heart of charity, still I should abate nothing of my zeal in hastening to thy altar and soliciting their cure. I should hasten to quench my thirst in the fountains of the Saviour, to satiate my spiritual hunger with that bread of angels, which is so effectual in restraining the inconstancy of the imagination, and the fickleness of the heart; I should hasten to render my calling and election sure, to obtain the pledge of all that God has promised, and to enlighten my faith at the rays of this Sun of eternal justice.

With so many and such powerful motives to animate my fervour, let me henceforward sigh with a holy impatience for this food of the soul; may I feel the deprivation of this divine nourishment as the most sensible of afflictions, and bewail, as the most grievous evil, the faults that keep me at a distance from the table of the Lord. Thrice hap-

py those souls who are accounted worthy daily to banquet on the bread of angels ! Thus to feed on the food of the elect, is even here on earth to enjoy a foretaste of heaven. Even should feelings of holy awe, of just distrust in myself, and of salutary fear at the view of my numerous failings, arrest my steps, and stay my entrance into the sanctuary, yet grant, O my God, that nothing may diminish the fervour of my desires ! May these very delays add fresh ardour to my love, and this very privation tend only to inspire it with fresh energy. Let my whole soul centre in the desire of thee ; may it be my only happiness to receive thee, my only joy to entertain thee in my heart, my only glory to possess thee through endless ages. Amen.

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#### ON THE DOMINE NON SUM DIGNUS.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory.—Ps. cxv. 1.

**T**HE nearer the moment destined for the consummation of the sacrifice approaches, the more should every Christian be penetrated with the sentiments conveyed in these words ; ‘ Jesus Christ offered himself for us alone.’ In all the prayers that have accompanied the sacrifice, our necessities have constantly engaged his attention ; a moment more, and he will prove to all who surround his altar, that it is for them he has prepared his sacred banquet, and that it is still his delight, not merely to

converse with them, but to live for them, and give himself up entirely to them. ‘But what is man,’—we cannot too often repeat with the prophet—‘what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou shouldst deign to visit him?’ Man, says St Bernard, is but dust and ashes. He is clothed with misery and corruption as with a garment; and the oftener he is reminded by the church, that it was for him that Christ came into the world, and instituted this mystery of charity, the more should he exclaim with the prophet; ‘Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory.’ Do not these words breathe the very spirit of the prayer; which is the subject of this day’s Instruction; ‘Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, say only the word, and my soul shall be healed?’ Is it not clear that the church wishes us never to lose sight of the mercy and loving-kindness displayed by Jesus Christ in the tender advances which he makes towards us; that there is nothing but frailty and unworthiness in the Christian whom he admits to his sacred banquet, and that to approach this sacrament in the dispositions it requires, we must come impressed with a feeling conviction of our misery and unworthiness? To enter fully into these dispositions, let us dwell with serious attention on these short but emphatic words.

Exalted by the eulogium which Jesus Christ passed thereon, we may justly regard these expressions as adopted by divine institution. It is

certain that they were employed by the faithful in the earliest ages of the church ; and though not comprised in the number of the prayers that composed the liturgy, we may collect from the writings of Origen, and the homilies of St Chrysostom, that the first pastors were very attentive in exhorting their flocks to employ these words before their approach to the table of the Lord, and to pronounce them in the spirit and with the sentiments which they so strongly breathe. I need not remind you how sensibly Jesus Christ was touched with these simple expressions of the centurion, who was afflicted at the malady of his servant, and came to solicit his cure. You will remember that the prayer of this man was immediately followed by the recompense due to his faith ; that according to the testimony of him who is the author of all faith, the faith of this man surpassed that of the most enlightened and religious of the people of Israel. But it may be useful to contrast the circumstance in which these words proved so effectual, with that in which they are here employed by the church. In the former instance, they were pronounced by a centurion, who would have remained a stranger to Jesus Christ, had not our Saviour expressly come to seek those who were at the greatest distance from his kingdom : in the latter, they are uttered by Christians whom he has called to the knowledge of his faith, sanctified by his grace, and called by the ministry of his servants. There we see a man, whose active situa-

tion in the service of his prince seemed fitted for any thing rather than serious recollection, tender piety, and aptitude for instruction : here we behold Christians fully instructed in the essence of the mystery in which they participate, prepared for the adorable communion of the body and blood of Christ by repeated admonitions, well-trying dispositions, and impressive prayers either dictated by the spirit of God or appointed by the church. There we see a master, whose servant is sick, and who, with a tenderness of disposition still more admirable from its being unfortunately so rare, comes to solicit the cure of him who serves him, with all the eagerness of a father whose only son is reduced to the last extremity : here we behold Christians who are engaged by their personal necessities, who have a cure far more difficult to attain, maladies far more dangerous to heal, and wants far more pressing to be relieved, since they implore the health and safety of their immortal souls. After considering this parallel with attention, to which side, I may ask, are the energy of the expressions and the vivacity of the sentiments most applicable ? Were this comparison pursued still farther ; were the lukewarmness of our faith contrasted with the lively, zealous, and persevering faith of the centurion, should we not be apprehensive, my brethren, of incurring the same reproach which fell from the lips of Jesus on that occasion ; ‘ Amen I say to you, I have not found such faith in Israel ?’

You cannot but feel how humiliating such a reproof must be, especially at that important moment when all the energy of faith should be called into action. Let us, therefore, repeat in the fulness of our hearts; *Lord I am not worthy*. On whatever side I cast my eyes, I behold nothing but proofs of my unworthiness. If I turn them inwardly, what multiplied prevarications, how many weaknesses fostered and indulged, how many inspirations neglected, how many duties unfulfilled, how many irregular thoughts and inordinate desires avowed by the heart, how many faults, unwept, unexpiated, unrepented! I know that thy mercy numbers not these failings among those deeper transgressions that deprive the soul of thy justice and love; yet this, perhaps, is the very motive for her indulging in this state of habitual langour. Thou wilt not, on account of these faults, deny me the participation of thy adorable body, but the more tenderly I am invited by thy merciful indulgence, the more strongly am I withheld by the view of my misery and unworthiness. Will the consideration of what I am, and what Thou art, tend to inspire me with confidence? Alas! so far from presuming to sound the depths of thy power and greatness, I dare not raise even my eyes towards thee. I have been taught by thy church, that thou art in this sacrament, as in the days of thy mortal life, true God and true Man; under this two-fold character, I behold abundant motives for holy fear. I will address thee in the words

of thy apostle ; Depart from me, for I am but sin and misery ; I acknowledge myself unworthy of a single look of thy mercy.

What, can it be a God I am about to receive ! Him whom the immensity of heaven is too bounded to contain—Him, of whose feet this vast universe is but the footstool. However vast and overwhelming the splendour of the court formed by those myriads of bright spirits that surround his throne, it is still infinitely disproportioned to his supreme Majesty ; however deep and majestic the canticle chaunted by this countless multitude of saints and angels, it is still infinitely unworthy the ear of his greatness. The God here announced to me is the Lord of hosts, the God terrible in might, he who formed the mountains, and spread out the vallies ; he who, at his will, can bid the tempest rage, can roll his awful thunders, and hurl upon our guilty heads the bolts of his fiery indignation. He has himself announced that he is a jealous God ; that he is the just and holy one by excellence ; that he regards the impious with horror, and that their iniquities are an abomination in his sight ; that he visits the sins of the father even to the remotest generations of his children ; that the justice of his people is but as filthy rags in his sight, and that he will judge the righteousness of men with no less rigour than their injustice. Overwhelmed with these awful considerations, what motives of confidence can I find to cheer my drooping soul ? Oh, prostrate at the foot of thy altar I

will exclaim ; ‘ Here, O Lord, thou art truly a hidden God.’ Yet, in spite of the veil that hides thee from my carnal eyes, I still behold thee present with the eyes of faith, and addressing thee in a voice of trembling apprehension, I exclaim ; *O Lord I am not worthy !*

It is, however, consoling to reflect, that the idea which faith gives us of thy humanity, is well-suited to calm my terrors. Man like myself, and for the love of me, invested with my miseries, laden with my sorrows, and moved with compassion for my woes, it was tenderness, it was mercy, it was charity, that induced thee to devise this ingenious method of imparting thyself to me ; but will the holiest of the children of men, he who knew sin only by its punishment, without contracting its stain, will he deign to visit a heart that is incessantly exposed to the rude attacks of sin, and liable by its very nature to yield to its malignity ; and which, in spite of its sorrow for past offences, and its utmost vigilance against any future relapse, is continually becoming responsible to the divine justice ? Can the mildest and most patient of the children of men endure all the impatience, the murmurs, the revolts, into which adversity betrays me ; all that cold reserve, that secret envy, those bitter resentments, caused by the forgetfulness, the contempt, or the ingratitude of my brethren ? Can the man of sorrows tolerate my extreme sensibility to whatever incommodes the body, and that ingenious delicacy which renders me so industrious



in procuring its ease and conveniency? Can the man of prayer, 'the perpetual intercessor,' as he is styled by the great apostle, can he endure my deficiency in the attention which this sacrifice requires, and the languor, indifference, and even repugnance, which I betray in approaching it? Will not this man of mercy, who was never insensible to the smallest necessities of his creatures, will he not be shocked at the view of my indifference to the woes of my fellow-men, my tardiness in succouring them, my false prudence in laying that by for imaginary wants which would be sufficient for their relief, or my cruel prodigality in squandering those riches in luxury and extravagance to which they have the justest claim? Can I lay my hand on my heart and say, that I am innocent of these charges? And if even after committing them, I have confessed them with sincerity, detested them with unfeigned sorrow, and expiated them by good works, yet does no secret disposition thereto still linger in my heart? Ah, under whatever point of view I regard this God made man, I feel abundant reason to exclaim; *O Lord, I am not worthy!*

But amidst this doubt and uncertainty of the divine favour, are there no motives to keep me from despondency? Yes, the example of my brethren, who though of the same nature as myself, and liable to the same weaknesses, approach with holy confidence to this God of all sanctity. I behold the altar encompassed with the just, whom

like myself their habitual frailties render responsible to the divine justice; by sinners, who were formerly a scandal to their fellow Christians, but are now the objects of their joy and consolation. I will hasten to mingle in this holy throng composed both of faithful and reconciled children; thus, perhaps, I may more easily escape the penetrating eye of him who is the searcher of hearts. But how dare I compare my faith to that of my brethren! Have I, like them, preserved my baptismal innocence? Is my nuptial robe undefiled in the eyes of the spotless Lamb? Have I never sullied its original purity, except by those lesser stains, which the blood of the Lamb effaces almost as soon as they fall thereon? If my conscience forces me to rank myself in the number of sinners, where are the tears I have shed, the violence I have offered to my corrupt nature, the works of penance I have performed? I have received the bread of angels, and yet still am subject to all the failings of humanity; I have eaten the bread of the strong, yet still am weakness itself; I have banqueted on the food of the elect, yet still am in the same alarming uncertainty which induced thy apostle to declare, that he knew not whether he was most deserving of love or hatred. What, therefore, will be the result of comparing myself with those faithful souls who encompass the altar?—a more certain conviction of my unworthiness. No, Lord, *I am not worthy*; Perhaps in thy eyes I am the least worthy of all those who are preparing to receive thee.

Shall I then give myself up to despair at the view of my miseries? Should I fulfil the views of this mystery of love, by yielding to the terrors that shake my soul? If my conscience reproach me with no voluntary frailty, no secret attachment to what displeases thee, where shall I go to seek that support of which I stand so much in need in the midst of so many enemies? I will hasten to comply with that tender invitation which I have heard from thy divine lips; ‘Come to me all you that labour, and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest to your souls.’ Yes, I will fly to thee, for I know that *if thou sayest only the word my soul will be healed*. A single word from thy mouth can operate the greatest wonders. What was requisite to create this vast universe? a single *fiat*; and all things started into existence at the voice of their Creator. What was requisite to reform so many creatures degraded by the sin of the first man? An *ecce venio, behold I come*, and thy eternal Father, satisfied with thy obedience, has cancelled the hand-writing of death that stood against us. What was requisite to render thee present in the midst of us, even till the consummation of ages? *This is my body*; and the efficacy of these simple words has from age to age perpetuated this most consoling of mysteries. What is requisite to cleanse my soul from all its stains? *Be thou made clean*; and my soul shall recover her innocence:—to heal all the wounds of my soul? *I will, be thou made whole*:—to loosen the bandage

that concealed thee from my eyes? *Receive thy sight:*—to arouse my soul from that state of abasement into which the view of her past transgressions had plunged her? *Arise.* A single word of thine is sufficient to operate the greatest prodigies of love: *Say only the word and my soul shall be healed.*

I am no longer surprised at the exclamation of thy apostle; ‘Lord to whom shall we go, for thou hast the words of eternal life?’ How deserving should I be of pity, were I so senseless as to seek them elsewhere! Have I not learnt from experience, that the language of men is vain and deceitful; that their tongue is a two-edged sword; that the wisdom of the wisest among them is but the prattle of thoughtless children? O sweet Saviour, do thou speak to my heart, and the tumults of the soul shall be hushed before thee. Do thou but speak, and nothing shall distract my mind from the attention it owes thee. ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;’ address me in those accents of peace which were promised to thy people: ‘Say to my soul, I am thy salvation,’ and every fear shall vanish, every terror shall be dissipated: *Say only the word, and my soul shall be healed.*

As this prayer contains an abridgement of all those that have preceded it, the church causes it to be thrice repeated; and as it comes home to the bosoms of those who recite it, she wishes each one to strike his breast in pronouncing it. It is worthy of remark, that when we have to petition the Almighty either for succour under temptation, for

our daily bread either of soul or of body, or for the pardon of our sins and deliverance from evil, the church establishes a community of prayer, in which all the faithful speak with the same interest and fervour of their common necessities : their language then is ; *Grant us—pardon us—deliver us, &c.* But when that kind of unworthiness is spoken of, which is felt, avowed, and exposed to the eyes of the Almighty, each one should dwell on his personal infirmities, and enter into judgment with himself alone. In this the church seems to condemn that ridiculous affectation, that hypocritical quick-sightedness which, in proportion to the strictness of our moral conduct, our assiduity in the practice of piety, and our fidelity in the discharge of our respective duties, renders us more alive to the faults of our neighbour, more rash in our judgments, more harsh in our reproofs.

Let this prayer, therefore, recal us to the true spirit of Jesus Christ ; let us not cease to repeat, both at the foot of the altar, and in every other situation ; *Lord I am not worthy!* We need not be apprehensive of belieing our own conscience, which, irreproachable as it may appear, will be found chargeable with a thousand imperfections, which must be humbly acknowledged in presence of Jesus Christ, whose precepts enjoin nothing so strongly as humility, whose life displayed nothing more forcibly than humility, who extolled no virtue more highly than humility. In fine, let us never forget that God loves none but the humble, and

that it is only humility which he will crown with everlasting glory. Amen.

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#### ON THE COMMUNION.

“The chalice of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord.” 1 COR. c. x. v. 16.

SUCH is the idea which the apostle St Paul gave the first Christians of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—an idea that is perfectly conformable to the doctrine of the church respecting the sacrifice of the Mass. He does not separate the blessing of the cup and the breaking of the bread, from the communion of the blood and the participation of the body of Christ. So firmly, therefore, is the church persuaded that the very essence of the sacrifice consists in the communion of the body and blood of Christ, that she does not consider the sacrifice as consummated, till the priest has received at least one of the species. If, with a view of entering fully into the dispositions which an actual participation of this sacrament requires, we were to consider not only the point of doctrine in question, but also the discipline of the church on this head, what a fund of instruction should we find open to us! But I must abridge these Instructions, and terminate a subject which has already exceeded the limits at first proposed. Not that I suppose in the pious audience whom I have the

happiness to address, any thing like weariness or impatience in listening to these truths. No; I have too favourable an opinion of your attention, zeal and assiduity; I should think, and with justice too, that to hurry over subjects of such importance, would be to correspond but ill to the sentiments of piety with which you are animated. The Communion alone will furnish three important subjects of instruction. In the first we shall consider communion in general; in the second, communion under both kinds, and in the third, we shall speak of spiritual communion: considered under these different points of view, the subject will afford abundant matter to animate your faith, and to satisfy a holy and religious curiosity. My brethren, let me solicit on your part a renewal of attention corresponding to the importance of the subject.

In entering on this Instruction, I cannot withhold a few observations, to show that the communion is no less essential to fulfil the ends of the holy sacrifice, than the oblation and consecration. The end for which Jesus Christ came into the world, was to supersede all the sacrifices of the old law. Therefore, whatever might have been the peculiar object of any one of these oblations, he renders it null and void, by concentrating in himself the separate effects of every species of sacrifice. He is an offering of propitiation for sin, of gratitude for benefits received, of prayer for all necessary graces; he is a peace-offering to counteract the effects of

the divine indignation, an offering of consecration to attach every thing to the worship of God which is by its nature devoted to his service. He is an offering of the first fruits, since, according to the language of scripture, he is the First-born of the sons of God; he is the Morning-sacrifice, since it is written in the beginning of the book, that he hath said; 'Behold I come!' He is the Evening-sacrifice, since he is to be offered even to the consummation of ages. He is the Lamb of the Pass-over; it is through him that we pass from death to life, from the captivity of sin to the liberty of the children of God, from this land of exile to our true home in the abodes of eternity. He represents the sacrifice of the dove by purity, and of the emissary goat, by taking upon himself all our iniquities. The blood of the chosen heifer was but a figure of his precious blood; the water and ashes which the priest mingled with the blood of this victim to sprinkle them on the people, was expressive of that abundant effusion which, streaming from the cross, was to flow even to the extremities of the earth, in order to purify all nations by its saving efficacy. In a word, this holocaust, this victim, this sacrifice, the most perfect of those of the old law, and the only one adequate to prefigure a perfect oblation, is but a shadow of our victim, which is offered, immolated, and entirely consumed, in honour of the Most High. As this consummation depends entirely on the communion, the effect of the sacrifice is in some degree sus-



pended, till the minister has received the sacred host. So convinced is the church of this truth, that her discipline is most formal on this point ; so that should the minister, while engaged at this awful function, be surprised by some unforeseen accident, so as to be rendered incapable of consummating the sacrifice, the church requires another minister to be substituted in his place. She is even induced, in consideration of the necessity of the case, to dispense with that rigorous fast which she exacts of those who partake of this divine food, and requires the sacrifice to be consummated, even though but one other priest were to be found, and he had already broken his fast. Now, if the communion of the priest be deemed indispensable to the integrity of the sacrifice, what are we to think of the communion of the assistants, since the divine victim is as truly immolated for them as for the priest ? Would it not be just to conclude, that the participation of the victim is of equal necessity, both to the faithful who encompass the altar, and to the minister who consummates these adorable mysteries ? The actual practice of the church seems, it is true, to detract from this necessity ; for whilst she lays her ministers under an obligation of fulfilling this holy action, she only enjoins the generality of the faithful to unite themselves in spirit to this sacrament as often as they approach the altar. To pretend, therefore, that the sacrifice is null and void to such of the faithful as fail actually to partake thereof, would be carrying the matter too far ;

but I should, at the same time, betray the interests of truth, did I not assure you, that there subsists, at least in the intention of the church, a wish to engage the faithful to communicate, if it were possible, every time they assist at Mass. Now, between these two extremes lies a just medium, of which every Christian should avail himself, and respecting which he should seek to be duly instructed, because it requires habitual dispositions of vigilance, zeal, sorrow for past sins, and resolutions of future amendment. Of vigilance—that nothing may hinder his approach to the table of the Lord on such days as the church invites him to draw nigh in worthy dispositions. Of zeal—to incite us to come properly prepared; to come, I say not merely assiduously, that would be too cold an expression, nor frequently, which would be still insufficient, but daily if it were possible. Of sorrow for past sins—for those imperfections, those habits and passions we have indulged, which stand as a wall of brass between the sinner and Jesus Christ, and which to less guilty souls are so many obstacles that arrest their steps when they wish to hasten to the altar of their God. Of a purpose of future amendment—that happy frame of mind, which leads us, by the grace of Jesus Christ, to form serious resolutions, and to begin the work of the Lord with ready zeal and earnestness; to fulfil our daily occupations with cheerfulness, and comply in a proper spirit with the duties of our state,

that living the life of Jesus Christ, we may seat ourselves with holy confidence at his table.

I said, that a daily participation of the holy communion, though not enjoined by the church as a positive precept, is yet perfectly conformable to her views and intentions ; but to advance nothing in a matter of such moment, but what is perfectly correct, allow me to explain my meaning. ~~I~~ I affirm, that the intention of the church being perfectly in unison with that of Jesus Christ, she must be influenced by the same motives that guided him in the institution of the sacrament and sacrifice of our altars. Now, Jesus Christ chose for the matter of this sacrament the most useful of all the elements of life; that which, at all times, among all nations, and in all states and conditions of life, is an object of universal consumption. Jesus Christ gave us his body, and to serve as the species by which this spiritual food is conveyed, he has chosen bread ; that nourishment which is never refused to the poorest, nor disdained by the richest and most fastidious of mankind ; that bread, which we daily demand in the divine prayer he himself has taught us ; that bread, which a tender father never refuses to his children, and for the acquisition of which he sacrifices his time, his toils, and not unfrequently health itself: In a word, that bread, which the wealthiest and most unfeeling of mankind never refuse to those who languish in poverty and want. Is it not sufficient to tell us, that his table is *daily* spread for us? Do we need a more

formal and explicit invitation to approach and partake of the abundance of the good things which he daily provides for us? Such is the first reason to show that the eucharist should be the daily nourishment of every Christian.

The second reason is founded on the practice of the first ages of Christianity. With respect to the communion, there was no difference in these times of primitive fervour, between days more or less solemn : every day that beheld him assembled in the place of worship, was an important festival to the first Christian. To prolong his stay there, each one brought with him such refreshments as were necessary to support the fatigue of his religious exercises ; but, before every other nourishment, that of the eucharist was received in all the sincerity of faith, and all the fervour of devotion : to be excluded from the table of the Lord, was to live under anathema. Nor was the church unmindful of those whose infirmities confined them to their homes ; the faithful were solicitous for the spiritual comfort of their absent brethren, and the pastors were provident of their necessities, by sending them this adorable nourishment. This parental solicitude, this watchful anticipation of the wants of their flock, was still more sensibly felt during the times of persecution, when each of the faithful was permitted to carry home a portion of this bread of life, in order that he might daily find therein a source of fervour and constancy to support him in the arduous profession of his faith.

The third reason is the precept of Jesus Christ, which equally regards the priest and the faithful. To the latter, therefore, may those instructions be applied, which the church has given her ministers in the holy canons. She does not, it is true, oblige them by a formal precept to officiate daily, but she testifies the strongest desire that they should do so ; and if she yields to the pious motives which sometimes induce them to keep at a distance from the altar, she is careful to remind them how culpable they would be to do so without a just cause ; she enjoins them to fulfil the obligations of their ministry, and accuses them of prevarication, if, through their negligence, the faithful are deprived of hearing Mass on such days as they are obliged to assist thereat. Hence the custom introduced into certain countries, on account of the scarcity of priests, of permitting the same minister to celebrate twice in the same day, that the faithful may not be deprived of, at least, a spiritual participation of this holy sacrifice. Now, the argument with which this obligation of daily offering the sacrifice of Jesus Christ furnishes me, is this ; that it is not less a daily bread, than an oblation which should every day be consummated. If, therefore, it is the food of the priest, it must be equally so of the faithful, since the necessities of both are the same. The merciful designs of the divine Institutor equally embrace the one and the other. The same motives that enforce the duty of sanctity, Christian perfection, and an humble imitation of Jesus Christ, equally and es-

essentially affect both states of life ; and as the distinguishing characteristic between the priest and the laity is only founded on the difference of the functions they fulfil, I have no hesitation in affirming, that, if there be any superior degree of perfection expected from the minister of the church, that such perfection can be regarded as merely relative to the peculiar functions he has to exercise. ' Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect,' is a precept which equally regards both the priest and the laity ; therefore, by a necessary consequence, they are equally included both in the promises and threats that are addressed to those who either honour or profane this bread of angels. Upon this principle, the church feels no scruple of admitting certain privileged souls to a daily participation of the holy communion, because, so truly angelic are their lives, that they form her joy and consolation. Hence all the masters of a spiritual life have placed the daily frequentation of the Lord's table at the head of those devout practices which are most proper to maintain the soul in a state of justice. Hence such religious orders as are most remarkable for regularity and fervour, have made this observance the most formal part of their rule. So that, to form a proper judgment of the intention of the primitive church respecting the holy communion, we must not so much attend to what is practised in these times of laxity and indevotion, as to the conduct of the church at the period of her triumph and her glory, as well as to the actual practice of the most faithful of her children.

I have been careful to advance nothing but what is strictly conformable to the sentiments of the fathers and doctors of the church ; and we shall find, that such of them as have written most strongly against the abuses to which this adorable sacrament is liable, felt no apprehension as to the undue advantage that might be taken of the testimony which they boldly rendered to the truth, in establishing the principles I have laid down ; yet, without weakening the force of their doctrine, they have been careful to enumerate the many, nay, almost universal exceptions that occur to this general rule,—exceptions that arise from unworthy dispositions, and from the too general decay of charity. We think it may not be unprofitable to tread in their footsteps, by drawing such consequences as naturally flow from these established principles.

The first consequence is, that if the generality of the faithful are unable to conform to the intentions of the church, by communicating as often as they assist at the holy sacrifice, they ought at least to feel the necessity of bewailing the imperfections that deprive them of this happiness. They should never join in this oblation without reflecting, that the eucharist is a daily bread, of which their spiritual infirmities deprive them, as of too solid a nourishment ; and that as often as they voluntarily raise obstacles to the receiving this adorable sacrament, they really offer an act of violence to the will, the intentions, and the charity, of Jesus Christ.

The second consequence is, that if their habitual

frailties render it impossible for them to participate daily in the sacramental communion, they ought, as far as they are able, to supply the defect by a spiritual communion; with this view they should study the rules which it requires, and the advantages it holds forth, in order to excite their minds to proper dispositions.

The third consequence is, that as the priests alone have retained the primitive custom of ascending daily, or at least very frequently to the altar, it is a duty incumbent on the generality of the faithful to testify a most profound respect for the priesthood; to regard those who are invested with this sacred character, as the anointed of the Lord, as so many living representatives of the invisible Christ who bestows himself on us in this sacrament; how cautiously, therefore, should they abstain from every rash judgment, from every indiscreet expression respecting them, according to the advice which the Almighty gives by the mouth of his prophet; ‘Touch not my anointed!’ But should the imperfections of their pastors sometimes become too conspicuous any longer to be dissembled, they may at least be silent and leave them to that God, who is sure, in due time, to visit them with just severity; let them rather look at home, and substitute prayer and edifying conversation in place of those tales of scandal which, under pretence of exposing the frailties of the priesthood, dishonour religion itself.

The fourth consequence is, to excite a spiritual hunger after this heavenly food, by continually



calling to mind the blessed effects of the eucharist, by awakening our faith from that lethargy into which it is too often lulled respecting this mystery, and which at once renders us less zealous in preparing for the sacrament, and less eager to partake thereof; never, therefore, let us leave the altar without forming fervent acts of desire after the holy communion, and of grief at the view of the imperfections that prevent us from approaching it. The fifth consequence is, that if our natural levity forbids a daily participation of the holy communion, it does not dispense with our regarding the eucharist as our daily bread, and all those who partake thereof as children of the same father, and consequently as our brethren in the order of salvation: hence it necessarily follows, that this part of the Mass reminds us of another kind of communion, which is confined to no particular time, place, or condition of life, but consists in those relations that connect all Christians with each other, and impose a law of mutual love, of reciprocal kindness, and of regarding ourselves as one bread and one body in Jesus Christ.

The sixth and last consequence is, to make our whole lives a constant preparation for the sacramental communion, so that one communion should serve to inspire us with better dispositions for the succeeding; to make us cautious not to allow our minds to be dissipated in worldly societies, which innocent as they may appear, and indispensable as we may deem them, have always a tendency to

weaken that spirit of faith, of recollection and humility which a worthy communion requires.

I have given a mere sketch of these various and important consequences, because in the following instructions we shall have occasion more strongly to enforce their necessity. What I have said is sufficient to prove, that the communion is an essential part of the august sacrifice of our altars; that as this part of the Mass is of all others the most interesting to us, since it applies the fruit of the sacrifice to our souls, so it demands such dispositions as correspond both to the excellence of the victim, and to the abundant graces which the Almighty imparts to the worthy receiver. Let us partake frequently, worthily, and efficaciously of these holy mysteries here below, till we are admitted to the sight of the spotless Lamb without veil or shadow, and are united to him throughout endless ages. Amen.

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#### ON COMMUNION IN BOTH KINDS.

Drink ye all of this.—MATTH. chap. xxvi. 27.

**I**N citing these words, it is far from being my intention to state all the groundless cavils which the enemies of our faith have raised against that constant practice of the church, by which the simple faithful are restricted to communion in one kind. If you are desirous of satisfying your minds on this essential point of discipline, works of solid learning are not wanting for that purpose;—the object I

propose to myself in the present instruction is not so much to direct, as to animate your faith. I shall, therefore, content myself with describing the actual practice of the church respecting the holy communion, and with pointing out the connexion that exists between the two species. It is sufficient, in the first place, to know that the church had a right, in her wisdom, to abolish communion under both kinds, however sanctioned by ancient practice ; secondly, that in abolishing it, she has retrenched nothing from the right which Jesus Christ gave the faithful of partaking both of his body and blood ; thirdly, that nothing is better calculated to prove the real presence of Jesus Christ in the eucharist, than the abolition of communion under both kinds, because from this very circumstance we are enabled to draw so forcible an argument against our opponents, that nothing but blindness itself, which I fear has too frequently a greater share in their errors than honest conviction, could resist its truth. The main object of our present instruction, therefore, is to show, that though communion under both kinds is indispensable to the priest, in order to consummate the eucharistic sacrifice, yet it is by no means requisite for the faithful, to render them partakers of the full benefits of this divine institution :—these two propositions I shall examine as briefly as possible, cautiously avoiding, at the same time, whatever might savour too much of the spirit of controversy, so foreign to the object proposed in these instructions.

I am addressing persons well instructed in the doctrines of the eucharist, and submissive to the principles by which it is established. They profess to believe that Jesus Christ is entire under each species, and under the smallest particle of the same species; that to receive either separately or conjointly the species of bread and the species of wine, is to communicate really and perfectly in the body and blood of Christ, and to communicate but once. The priest, therefore, who, after receiving the sacred host, takes the chalice and drinks the precious blood, has not twice received Jesus Christ, because there exists between these two actions so intimate a relation, that they no ways affect the unity essential to the sacrament. In the same manner the faithful, who, according to the actual practice of the church, receive the communion under the species of bread only, receive Jesus Christ entire and without division. They receive his flesh, which, by virtue of these words; *This is my body*, exists under the species of bread: they also receive his blood, which, by the perfect connection between these and the following words; *This is my blood*, exists under both species. They receive the adorable soul of Jesus Christ, which, as our divine Redeemer is, by his resurrection, placed in a state of impassability and immortality, can no more be separated from his body. In fine, they receive the divinity, which was heretofore united to the body and soul of Christ at the moment of his burial, though the soul and body underwent a separa-

tion; surely, therefore, it ought, with far greater reason, to be inseparable from his body in the eucharist. Such, in substance, is the profession of faith which each of us has made on presenting himself at the table of the Lord.

After rendering this homage of our belief in so great a mystery, it may be well to examine whether communion under both kinds is essential to the integrity of the sacrifice—what has been the practice of the church in different ages respecting communion in both kinds, or rather under the species of wine, as far as it regarded the generality of the faithful—and, lastly, what gave rise to the established custom of communicating under the species of bread only.

To judge of the motives that render it necessary for the priest to communicate under the species of wine, it will be sufficient to attend to the institution of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Jesus Christ took bread and wine, and, after blessing them both, he gave thanks to his eternal Father, and pronounced over each species the words that marked its peculiar destination: *Take and eat, this is my body:—Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood, &c.* Nor was it till he had instituted the sacrament and sacrifice in all their extent, that he added; *Do this in remembrance of me.* He does not, therefore, leave it to the wisdom of his church, still less to the discretion of his ministers, to decide on either species. That is to be done in remembrance of him, of which he himself set us the

example. He took bread to change it into his body, and wine to change it into his blood; consequently the priest can offer only bread and wine. He distributed both to his apostles with a formal command to eat and drink thereof; the ministers, therefore, who succeed them in this sacred function, must take this food and receive this drink, without which the precept of Jesus Christ would not be duly observed, the institution of his sacrament would remain unfulfilled, and his sacrifice unconsummated.

I say unconsummated—for I have already shown, in speaking of the consecration, that wine is an element no less essential to the sacrifice than bread; I there considered the act by which the substance of wine is changed into his blood, as one and the same with that which immediately precedes it. Yet, though the real and entire presence of Jesus Christ is immediately operated by the sacred words which the priest pronounces in the name of his divine Master, the sacrifice is not so, because a holocaust, the most perfect of all sacrifices, can only be consummated by the entire destruction of the victim; now the act of consecration, though it operates the immolation, effects not the destruction of the victim. Therefore, when Jesus Christ said to his apostles, *Take and drink, this is my blood;* he added—*The blood of the new and eternal testament; a mystery of faith; which shall be shed for you and for many, to the remission of sins.* As if he had said: *The sacrifice I now institute shall not be a mere*

unsubstantial representation of that which I am about to offer ; my blood shall be here as truly and as efficaciously shed as on the altar of the cross ; it shall in both cases be a testimony of my alliance with human nature, a mystery of faith ; it is a sacrifice, whose efficacy shall be superadded to the merits of my last and great sacrifice ; and you, my beloved apostles, together with those who shall succeed you in this august function, you shall derive from the abundance of my blood, that plenitude of grace which I will enable you to impart in my name to the rest of your brethren.

But, is not this obligation imposed on the priest, of taking the bread, and drinking the cup, equally binding on the laity ? Instituted for the use of all, does not this sacrament seem to require the same dispositions from all, as it operates in all the same effects ? The ordinance which enjoins communion to the generality of the faithful, is taken from the same words, which make it binding upon the minister of the altar. He has equally said to both the one and the other ; ‘ My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ;—if you eat not of this flesh, and drink not of this blood, you have no life in you ;—do this in remembrance of me.’ On what grounds, then, does this distinction rest, of allowing the priest to receive in both hands, while the people are confined to one ?

Were this question proposed by a person of another communion, or by one of those cavilling Christians, who require that every point, either

of doctrine or discipline should be proved even to demonstration, I should reply on the strength of this incontestible principle—that the church has a right to determine in all that appertains to the administration of the sacraments, and to make such alterations as her wisdom may suggest, provided they do not affect the essence of the sacrament; and, that since it has been proved by unanswerable arguments, that he who receives either the species of bread, or that of wine only, receives Jesus Christ whole and entire, and fully and essentially partakes of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the church is empowered, and, even under certain circumstances, is obligated to restrict the simple faithful to one of the two species, without affording any ground of complaint on their part as to the effect of such variation. If this answer, satisfactory as it is, should be insufficient to overcome their obstinacy, and ensure their submission, all other proofs derivable from the constant tradition of the church could have no influence on their minds.

But to the tractable Christian I have no other proofs to produce than the facts themselves, and these will be deemed sufficient. That the church considers herself authorized to change the manner of administering the holy sacrament, is evident from her past conduct; or rather at no time has she considered communion under both kinds as essential to the sacrament. Hence, even in the earliest ages, traces may be discovered of a total suppression of the species of wine, in as far as it re-



garded the simple faithful; and from age to age instances may be found, where, in certain places, and under certain circumstances, the faithful contented themselves with the species of bread, and firmly believed that in receiving this only, they fully partook of the body and blood of Christ. Sometimes a scarcity of wine obliged the ministers to reserve it for the oblation of the holy sacrifice only: sometimes a multitude of the faithful, from a natural repugnance to this liquor, were dispensed from using it: at other times the concourse of people that presented themselves to receive, together with the danger of spilling the precious blood, were assigned as reasons against the use of the cup. The times of persecution afford numerous instances of Christians, who were necessitated to conceal themselves, and to carry the holy Eucharist to their own homes to receive it in secret, all of whom were contented with the species of bread. Sometimes they were satisfied with pouring a few drops of this precious blood into a quantity of wine sufficient to be distributed among the congregation; but at no time since the establishment of the church can it be positively asserted that the faithful have uniformly received the communion in both kinds; the most convincing proof is the silence of these very faithful, when, in the ninth age, the bishops entirely abolished this custom in the countries where it still subsisted. Firmly grounded in the doctrine of the Eucharist, and religiously attached to the discipline of the church, the laity saw no

reason to complain of a suppression which was sanctioned by the wisest motives; they relaxed nothing of their usual fervour in approaching the holy communion, persuaded that this restriction which the wisdom of the church suggested could, in no respects, interfere with their rights, affect the essence of the sacrament, or weaken its efficacy.

My brethren, what conclusion are we to draw from these various reflections? I am persuaded that your faith is too firmly grounded to require any additional motives to strengthen it as to the essential doctrine of the Eucharist; yet at the same time it may be useful to exhort you to unite yourselves with the priest in the communion under both kinds: for though it be an article of faith, that he who receives the species of bread, receives Jesus Christ whole and entire, and receives him with the same effusion of his graces, still it is certain that the devout Christian, without actually partaking of the species of wine, may make a spiritual application of the same, by a union of his prayers with those of the priest, by a special attention to the virtue of the blood of Jesus, by an interior immolation of his own will, whereby he imitates, as far as in him lies, the actual effusion of the blood of his Lord and Saviour. While repeating with the priest the words that accompany this action; *The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul to life everlasting*, it may be profitable to call to mind whatever the inspired writings pro-

nounce respecting the efficacy of this precious blood, since it is by virtue thereof that Christ has established peace between God and his offending creature ; that he has once entered into the sanctuary of heaven to open us the way thither. It is this blood which the pure and innocent hands of the eternal High-priest offer without ceasing to his Father in our behalf, and which, even to the consummation of ages, shall merit for the sinner reconciliation and favour, for the just man perseverance and the crown of his labours, for the suffering soul refreshment and peace. In this sense every Christian may exclaim in token of his love and gratitude to his Lord and Saviour ; *I will take the chalice of salvation*, and, by virtue of this chalice, *I will call upon the name of the Lord*.

Let us consider it as a duty to enter into-dispositions like these. As often as we assist at the adorable sacrifice of our altars, let us take the chalice of the Lord by faith—confirming by repeated acts our belief in this mystery ; by Christian hope—recalling to mind all the merits and graces included in the superabundance of his blood ; by charity—in sacrificing our own wills, the desires of our hearts, our possessions, and our very lives, if such be the will of God, in order to correspond with the views of his providence in our regard. Above all, let us imbibe in this chalice of love the wine of fraternal charity ; for as this precious liquor, though composed of so many drops united, forms but one and the same substance, in the same man-

ner should Christians, however disunited by age, condition, climate, or character, form but one and the same body, as they feed on one and the same divine bread, and should be actuated by the same spirit, as they are all tending to the same happiness. Ah, it is in these abodes of eternal happiness, that the communion of the blood of Jesus shall be established never more to be interrupted ! There shall those memorable words of our divine Master be truly fulfilled ; *I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, till the kingdom of God shall come.* He had before said of himself ; *I am the vine ; you are the branches ;* Oh let us abide in him, thus only can we bear the fruits of justice in time, thus only can we gather the increase in eternity ! Amen.

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#### ● ON SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

“ My words are spirit and life.” JOHN, c. vi. v. 64.

**G**OD forbid that I should pervert these expressions in the same fatal manner with those who differ from our communion, by applying them to the words that operate the Eucharistic mystery ! They have the presumption to force that into a spiritual construction, which Jesus Christ proposed in a plain and literal sense. They teach, that this divine Saviour has given himself to us in the Eucharist only in a mystic and figurative manner ; while we believe that he is really and substantially

present.' They reproach us with understanding the words of Christ in a manner that is carnal and unworthy the eternal Wisdom; while we accuse them of misinterpreting the most formal of his precepts, and rejecting one of the most salutary means of sanctification. Let us guard against the seductions of their sophistry, and endeavour, on our part, to recal them to the true faith by our earnest prayers and the example of our lives.

But while we are cautioned against running into this extreme, we are also taught, that although the terms which Jesus Christ ordained, and which by his command the priest employs to operate the mystery of the Eucharist, exclude not the plain and literal sense, yet, at the same time, they contain a spiritual and mysterious signification, which will prove highly conducive to our instruction and sanctification. It is to those in particular, who, for just reasons, are restricted for a time from sacramental communion, that I address myself on the present subject, in order to instruct them in the method of making a spiritual communion as often as they assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This is a practical truth, and consequently demands your most serious attention.

There can be no difficulty in understanding what is meant by spiritual communion, especially when opposed to that real and sacramental communion, which is made by the priest as often as he offers the holy sacrifice, and by the simple faithful when they are admitted to these sacred mysteries. It

may be regarded as a kind of participation in the adorable sacrament; but a participation which is interior, and whose effects are less apparent: yet, like sacramental communion, it has its necessity, its dispositions, its advantages, its regulations, and imposes certain obligations on those who have recourse thereto.

Its necessity—for, as I have already proved sacramental communion to be essential to the integrity of the sacrifice, inasmuch as the church does not consider it as consummated, till the priest has received the eucharistic species—so I hesitate not to advance, that of those who assist at the celebration of our holy mysteries, no one can be truly said to have heard Mass according to the spirit of the church, unless he has united himself to the adorable victim that is there offered, at least by a spiritual communion. In proof of the truth of this assertion, I appeal to the prayers which the priest recites at this part of the Mass, and which, as they equally apply to all the faithful, must be void of meaning, unless accompanied at least by a spiritual participation of the body and blood of Christ; *I will take the bread of heaven—I will take the chalice of salvation; and they shall both preserve my soul to everlasting life.* Such are the prayers which each of the faithful should recite with the priest, and of which he should make a personal application, if he is desirous to partake of the full efficacy of the sacrifice. I am well aware, that all are not capable of making this application of the prayers of the Mass, in

a distinct and methodical manner ; and hence it is that the church has permitted such other prayers to be substituted in their place, as convey the same meaning, and, at the same time, are better adapted to the capacities of the simple and uneducated. But all these prayers agree in enforcing the necessity of spiritual communion, and in pointing out the requisite dispositions.

I say dispositions—for how many Christians are lulled into a fatal security, under the persuasion that they show all due respect to the body and blood of Christ, and that in this respect, at least, their conduct is irreproachable ! But do they not offer a real insult to the holy sacrament, as often as they approach the altar with a heart enslaved by the passions, and abandoned to the most dangerous affections ? May we not, in the name of Jesus Christ, address them as he addresses the profaners of his sanctuary ; What advantage can you promise yourselves from my blood, if it be received into a heart infected with the corruption of sin ? The Christian, therefore, who is desirous to communicate spiritually and efficaciously, must begin this act of his religion by a sincere detestation of sin ; he must make a heartfelt resolve never to be guilty of them again ; he must solicit his deliverance from them through the merits of this precious blood ; he must effectually renounce every dangerous affection, every criminal connection, every attachment that is incompatible with the love of God. He must bring to the foot of the altar

a deep and sincere conviction of his own misery and infirmity, accompanied with a salutary distrust in his own strength. He must feel his necessities, he must acknowledge, that without the grace of God he can do nothing, and this very reflection should excite him to fervour and confidence. In fine, he must pray for the blessing of a lively faith, a firm and unshaken hope, a tender and fervent charity, because the holy communion requires these dispositions in all who approach it, whether they really or spiritually partake of the body and blood of Christ.

Another consideration that should excite us to these dispositions is, that the same holy communion, which proves so efficacious to the worthy receiver, holds out no common advantages to those who merely approach it in a mystic and spiritual manner. If it unites the former to the body, the blood, and the divinity of their Lord and Saviour; it unites the latter to the faith which he has taught, to the hope which he has merited, and to the charity of which he has set us the example. It unites them to his mystical body, which is his church; to his Spirit, which is the soul that animates it; to his divinity, which is its support and life. It unites them to his cross, of which this mystery is a representation; to his sacrifice, of which this oblation is a renewal; to his merits, which are applied to our souls by virtue of this immolation; to all his divine virtues, of which this mystery presents a daily example. Thus the union between Jesus



Christ and his people, between the head and the members, is renewed as often as we strive to enter into the spirit of this oblation by a spiritual communion.

Sacramental communion weakens the force of concupiscence, and moderates the violence of the passions ; spiritual communion furnishes powerful arms to resist the assaults of flesh and blood. It is here that the Christian comes to lay open his infirmities, to solicit with confidence that oil of grace and that wine of charity which the pious Samaritan is ever ready to pour into the wounds of the soul ; it is here that the sinner, who is penetrated with a feeling conviction of his miseries, may find every resource necessary to deliver him from the horrors of his perilous situation. The same hand which repelled him from the altar on account of his unworthiness, is ready to beckon him back in kindness and love : the same voice, which from the depths of the sanctuary, warned thence all the servants of sin, shall whisper in accents of mercy ; ‘ Come, all ye that are heavily laden, and I will refresh you.’ If a just dread keeps the sinner at a distance from the altar, a confidence still more just transports him in spirit even to the altar itself, to become with Jesus Christ a victim of sorrow and repentance ; conducted to the sanctuary by dispositions like these, he will go forth renewed in his strength, and terrible to the enemies of his salvation.

Sacramental communion quickens the life of

grace in the soul ; but there are also principles of life to him who spiritually partakes of this adorable sacrament—nothing is better calculated to render our dispositions conformable to those of Jesus Christ. In uniting ourselves to him by the desires of our hearts, we in some measure exercise ourselves in all the virtues which he himself practised : we unite ourselves to his obedience, by the sacrifice of our own will ; to his humility, by the sacrifice of our pride ; to his patience, by our ready submission to the trials and sufferings which his providence allots ; to his charity, by the ardour of our love, and the fervour of our zeal in his service. As this kind of communion can be renewed as often as we assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, repeated acts of these virtues will insensibly destroy in our hearts all the seeds of sin, and foster therein that sanctity and justice which are the very life of the soul.

May I not reasonably hope, therefore, to find in a spiritual as in a sacramental communion, a germ of immortality, a pledge of eternal life ? If we die with Jesus Christ, says the apostle, we shall live and reign with Jesus Christ. As often, therefore, as I unite myself spiritually to Jesus Christ, I surrender my whole being into his hands ; and, to use the words of the great St Leo, I die with him, am buried with him, and with him am raised again to the newness of life, by bursting again from the shackles of mortality, by rending asunder the fetters of sin and death, in which the infernal foe

seeks to hold me captive. Hence I acquire a right to that glorious resurrection, of which the mystery of the Eucharist is at once the image and the operative principle.

But to reap the benefit of this holy exercise, it is necessary to conform to the rules which a faith in this mystery prescribes :—for I must be cautious not to confound spiritual with sacramental communion. I cannot, of course, forget the superiority of the latter over the former, nor the more transcendent advantages which it holds forth ; nor must I neglect that real participation of the body of Christ, which alone can insure me the full benefits of this divine institution. I ought to render the one subservient to the other, by making this spiritual communion preparatory to the actual reception of the body and blood of Christ ; and so far from making it a pretext either for communicating seldom, or for abstaining entirely from the holy communion, this very act should tend more feelingly to convince me of the unhappiness of being deprived of this sacred food ; should excite in my heart a holy longing for this life-giving banquet, and urge me to make such resolutions as are proper to produce the dispositions of a worthy communicant. To these general dispositions, I will add such others as are nearly allied thereto, and best calculated to insure the fruit of this holy exercise. We should transport ourselves in spirit to the foot of the altar, mingle with those who are preparing to receive this life-giving food, and, after joining in the

confession of sins, and bending, in deep conviction of our own unworthiness, to receive the blessing which the priest pronounces in the name of Jesus Christ, we should humbly crave a share of the crumbs that fall from this sacred table, which is only spread for the true and faithful children of God; we should esteem ourselves happy in being permitted to rank with his chosen servants, and, in some measure, to gather the fragments of this hallowed banquet, by uniting with the priest and the faithful who receive the adorable body of Christ. Such are the means that prepare the just to communicate so fervently and so efficaciously; and, if assiduously employed, these same means would open to the greatest sinners the way to the sanctuary, bring them nigher to those holy dispositions which this sacrament requires, and make them some recompence for that state of privation to which passions but half extinguished, and habits but half subdued, unfortunately subject them. Feeble recompence, it is true, compared with the abundant advantages they might reap from an actual participation of the bread of angels!

This consideration naturally leads me to examine the obligations which a spiritual communion imposes on such as are desirous to profit fully by this devout practice. It imposes both on the just and on sinners the necessity of desiring to be duly prepared for the holy communion. In the first place, without stopping to controvert that excessive fear which sometimes serves as a pretext to some souls,

in other respects irreproachable, for passing whole years at a distance from this divine banquet, I should send them without further delay to the holy table, under the persuasion, that if they weighed the motives for such separation in the scales of the sanctuary, they would easily discover whether their fears were founded on motives of true respect, or were the mere consequence of affected negligence, misplaced timidity, or an injurious distrust in the loving-kindness of their Redeemer. Let them pause; and considering attentively the remains of weakness and misery that still lurk in the soul, let them carefully distinguish between such as are the natural effect of human frailty, and such as spring from any deliberate perverseness of the will; thus will they be enabled to apply the proper remedy which is always to be found in the holy communion:—such is the obligation of the just.

That of sinners, is to break down without delay the wall of separation, which their iniquities interpose between them and Jesus Christ; to employ the most prompt and effectual means of overcoming that spiritual lukewarmness which keeps them at a distance from the holy table. Hence, a sincere confession of their sins, a speedy reparation of their scandals, a holy self-abasement, a lively compunction for past transgressions, a scrupulous watchfulness over their own hearts, assiduity in prayer, the flight of idleness and sloth, a love of penance, a relish for solitude, unremitting attendance at the

place of prayer, but above all an eagerness to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass:—such are the engagements which the sinner contracts, in consequence of the privilege granted him by the church, of uniting himself to Jesus Christ by a spiritual communion.

Here terminates that part of the Mass, which is consecrated to the consummation of the sacred victim. It only now remains to speak of the thanksgiving which follows this holy action; we shall comprise this last part of the liturgy in our two concluding instructions. I call upon you to renew your attention, and to beseech the Almighty, that the practice of all the truths we have meditated, may make us begin, carry on, and finish this most sacred of actions in a manner at once conducive to his glory, which is its object, and to the sanctification of our own souls, which is its end. Amen.

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#### ON THE CONCLUDING PRAYERS OF THE MASS.

Give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always. *CoLOSS, chap. i. 3.*

**T**HE whole of the Mass may be justly considered as an uninterrupted act of thanksgiving. The character which Jesus Christ assumes therein, is that of the eucharistic victim; and every christian who is desirous of uniting himself to the sacrifice which he offers to his eternal Father, ought to enter with his blessed Redeemer into those feelings of grati-

tude that are due to a God, whose mercies prevent us continually, and every where follows us. But though like immolation and prayer, thanksgiving is essential to the sacrifice, yet it was but proper, that the church should set apart a portion of the liturgy as a more marked and prominent testimony of her gratitude to God, through Jesus Christ, for the ineffable mystery operated on our altars, and for that multitude of graces which is thereby poured out upon his whole church. It is to this particular object, that she devotes the present part of the Mass, and thereby admonishes us to enter into her feelings. The necessity there is of terminating a subject upon which I have so amply enlarged, obliges me to compress the remaining truths into as narrow a compass as possible. But let not this consideration induce you to shorten your meditation on subjects equally important with those on which we have already dwelt; on the contrary, let me entreat you to supply by your assiduity, whatever is wanting on my part in these last instructions. Ever remember, that gratitude is a disposition no less essential to secure the fruit of the holy sacrifice, than those we have before recommended, and that these latter prayers have equal claims with the preceding to your fervour and attention.

The different exercises comprised in this last part of the Mass, are fully expressive both of the intention of the church, and of the dispositions she requires. A passage of the holy scripture called

the communion ; a prayer entitled the Post-Communion ; the dismissal of the people, or the *Ite, Missa est* ; the benediction, and the last Gospel :—such are the objects that rapidly succeed each other, and tend to awaken the gratitude of the faithful for all the graces received in this divine sacrifice. We will consider these various exercises as briefly as possible, and deduce such reflections as are most proper to make us worthily and effectually fulfil them.

In the first place, the name *communion* is given to that verse which is selected from some psalm, and chaunted by the choir immediately after the communion of the priest, and which the priest himself recites after the different ablutions which follow the communion. Mention is made of this practice in some of the most ancient liturgies. Formerly the verse was never varied ; on all her solemnities the church repeated these striking words of the prophet ; ‘ Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.’ When the number of communicants was great, the whole of the thirty-third psalm, from which this verse is taken, was chaunted in order to fill up the time required for the distribution of the holy eucharist. Similar to this ancient custom, is that established in certain parishes, of singing on particular festivals when the communion is numerously attended, an entire psalm, in which such of the faithful as do not frequent the holy table, may find instructions relative to the particular mystery of the day. This psalm always terminates with the anthem called the communion.



The present practice of the church is to select a single verse, which is at once applicable to the occasion, and to the peculiar graces imparted to those who worthily celebrate it. I cannot too earnestly invite you to meditate on these different anthems; they will always be found to contain the strongest motives to incite us to a constant union with Jesus Christ in the sacrament of his body and blood.

This anthem is followed by the salutation to the people, which I fully explained in a former instruction. After the mutual good wishes expressed in the words; *The Lord be with you;—And with thy spirit*: the priest proceeds to the post-communion, a prayer not intended merely to follow, but to ratify the good effects which faith authorizes us to expect from the former. It is easy to see, that the object of the church in these different prayers, is to obtain from the Almighty, through Jesus Christ, that the peculiar fruit of the mystery and solemnity which she celebrates should be applied to our souls by virtue of his blood. We shall practically feel the force of this truth, if as often as we assist at the celebration of the holy mysteries, we devoutly and attentively recite these short but energetic prayers. A single example would be sufficient to prove the justice of this observation, and I should pause to produce such an example, had I not the happiness to know that I am addressing persons who are in the habit of assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass in these happy dispositions of faith and devotion.

After this prayer, the priest and people again salute each other with the same mutual benediction, which is followed by what in all missals is termed the dismissal of the people, or the *Ite, Missa est*. Though apparently the least interesting of any circumstance in the Mass, these very words would furnish abundant matter for an entire instruction, were I not apprehensive that the subject has already been extended to an unreasonable length. I might point out the different variations to be found in different missals; I might produce many powerful motives for edification, by clearly proving that the faithful of the first ages, so far from approaching the altar in dispositions of indifference and disgust, actually stood in need of being admonished of the time when it was necessary to withdraw.

Docile to the voice of their pastors, they listened to nothing but the suggestions of their fervour, as far as regarded their assembling in the holy place; but it was always found necessary to give them the signal to depart. Might I not justly take occasion, from this remark, to expose the shameful negligence of so many Christians, who never enter the temple till long after the prayers that precede the holy sacrifice have commenced; who have the presumption to cavil respecting the particular moment in which it suffices to be present in order to satisfy the obligation of hearing Mass; who form to themselves such plausible maxims on this head, as are dictated by irksomeness and a spirit of lukewarmness, which, if they were followed

ed, would scarcely leave time to hurry over this sacred exercise? I am not less scandalized with the indecent haste of but too many, who scarcely wait for the benediction of the priest before they are away; who comply with this most tender and consoling of duties, as though they were acquitting themselves of the most grievous and painful of obligations. But I have not the misfortune to address Christians of this description. I am speaking to such as are fully aware that whatever appertains to this holy exercise, partakes of the sanctity of that victim, from whose saving merits all these prayers and ceremonies derive their whole value and efficacy. To them it will be sufficient simply to suggest, that they ought to listen with religious attention to the priest at private, and the deacon at solemn Masses, when in the words, *Ite, Missa est*, they announce that the sacrifice is concluded and the prayers terminated. To such Christians it is a pleasing task to point out the variations which the church prescribes relative to this circumstance of the Mass. On certain days, instead of these words, the priest substitutes the following: *Let us bless the Lord*; to which the people reply—*Thanks be to God!* Few Christians are acquainted with the reason of this difference. We learn from various authors, that there were certain days on which the church, after offering the holy sacrifice, still retained the faithful in the holy place, to employ them in other devout exercises. On such occasions, the people were not dismissed;

but were invited to remain and bless the Lord for all his mercies, and particularly for the sacred mysteries that had just been operated in their behalf; it was more especially on days of fasting and penance, and on the greater festivals, that the church observed this practice. Hence it is that on the vigils of particular solemnities, and during Lent and Advent, the latter of which was devoted to a course of penance not less rigorous than the former, this distinction is still retained. This edifying example of the first ages is very proper to inspire the faithful with a desire of sanctifying these days in the interior of their houses by exercises of piety and meditation, in order, as far as in them lies, to imitate those times of primitive fervour, when the faithful knew the happy art of devoting a due portion of time to public prayer and assiduous instruction, without allowing them to interfere with the duties of their state. On such occasions, the faithful should say to themselves; The church has not yet finished her prayers; she is about to prolong them, and invites me to continue them with her.

Before concluding this article, it will be proper to say a word on the custom of suppressing the *Itc, Missa est*, in Masses for the dead. This practice is founded upon the same motives with that we have just noticed. These Masses, when celebrated with the usual solemnities, are generally followed by a recommendation of the soul of the departed, which forms a continuation of the office of

the dead. Hence the piety of the church has engaged her to apply to them not only the fruit of the holy sacrifice which she offers in their behalf, but also the different prayers that accompany this oblation. On this principle we may account for a multitude of ceremonies either added or suppressed, which constitutes an essential difference between the Mass offered for the intentions of the living, and that celebrated for the repose of the dead. For example, the psalm *Judica me, Deus*, is omitted in the preparatory prayers, because the priest, as it were, loses sight of himself and the faithful, to attend exclusively to the necessities of the souls departed; who, to use the expressions of the above psalm, are no longer in a condition to approach the altar of their God, and to participate personally in the merits of the victim that is there offered. For the same reason, the priest, at the beginning of the Introit, neither signs himself with the sign of the cross, blesses the deacon before the gospel, nor the people at the conclusion of the Mass, because at this moment the church reserves all her benedictions for such of her children as are groaning at a distance from her, in the place of expiation and tears. The Gloria and the Creed are also omitted, because the day devoted to supplications for their relief and refreshment, is to her a day of sorrow and mourning, excited by the painful reflection that they are still in a place of suffering. I might cite other instances to the same purpose, were not the detail foreign to my

present subject: I shall, therefore, content myself with observing, that in place of the *Ite, Missa est*, the church substitutes these words; *May they rest in peace!* To engage all who have partaken of these holy mysteries, to unite in a pious demand, that the Almighty would grant them a speedy admittance into that place of refreshment, light and peace, which Jesus Christ alone could merit for them by his blood.

I have dwelt thus long on this particular ceremony, because few occasions are offered of referring to the subject. I had many reflections to make on the benediction which follows, and which is nearly of apostolical date. St Justin, the martyr, speaks of it in the apology which he addressed to the Roman emperor; indeed at no time were the people dismissed without a benediction, though this benediction has sometimes varied as to its form. Sometimes it was given in a more solemn manner; at others with less ceremony: most frequently it was accompanied, as at present, with an invocation of the three persons of the blessed Trinity, while at other times it consisted of a simple demand for the peace of heaven on the congregation. The sign of the cross has almost invariably accompanied this benediction, because it is from the cross of Jesus Christ that every grace and blessing is derived. The established practice is, that at private Masses, the minister pronounces these words over the people: ‘May the Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless you all. Amen.’ In

certain churches all the priests who officiate at solemn Masses, chaunt the above words, that they may the better be heard by the whole congregation ; but in whatever manner the blessing is pronounced, let us ever remember, that the priest represents in his person the whole church of which he is a minister : it is in her name, therefore, that he pronounces these words of grace and benediction. Can we doubt of the efficacy of this prayer, if by our indevotion or obstinacy in sin we do not ourselves counteract its salutary effects ? I would, therefore, address you in the words used at the pontifical Mass : ‘ Bow humbly your heads to receive the benediction.’ Every blessing descends from him, at whose fiat all things started into existence. His name, which is worthy of all our benedictions, is the only source whence every grace and blessing is to be derived. Humble yourselves, then, under his mighty hand, since he imparts his grace to none but the humble—to those who place no dependence on themselves, but expect all things at his hands ; and may the Almighty God, who exerts his power only to manifest his mercy, bless a people whom he has created for his glory, ransomed by his blood, and sanctified by his holy Spirit. Let us, with all the sincerity of our hearts, answer amen to this last prayer of the Mass ; but let it be an amen never again to be contradicted by our actions, never again to be belied by those infidelities, that dry up the bounteous source of grace and benediction.

This prayer is followed by the last Gospel, which the church has selected from the first chapter of St John, in which the divinity of the word is set forth in a manner so clear and sublime. I shall not presume to amplify the grand and energetic language presented in this extract from the inspired writings; the Spirit of God can alone recount the ineffable generation of the Eternal Word in the bosom of his Father. As for us, let us never recite it but with feelings of the most profound veneration and awe: if tempted to disbelief, let us employ these powerful words to banish from our minds the spirit of seduction and lies. Let us often have in our mouths, but more especially in our hearts, this principal dogma of faith, which is the foundation of every other; *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*. By calling our attention to this passage of the inspired writings, the church has furnished us with ample matter for meditation, and powerful motives to induce us to apply to our own souls the blessed effect of the mysteries at which we have assisted. The Word made flesh, has proved to us in prayer a powerful intercessor; in the oblation, a victim of saving grace; in the communion, the bread of life. Amidst the various duties and occupations of the state of life which Divine Providence has assigned us, may he prove a model, a pastor, and a guide; that, as he dwells amongst us by his presence in the holy sacrament, we may merit by his grace to dwell with him for all eternity. Amen.



ON THE BEST MEANS OF SECURING THE FRUIT OF THE  
HOLY SACRIFICE.

“ We cease not to pray for you, and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”—COLLOSS. i. 9.

**T**HOUGH he who now addresses you can neither pretend to the merits of the apostle of the gentiles, nor produce the testimony of the labours and zeal which entitled St Paul to the confidence of the church of Colossus; yet he presumes to offer up the same prayer in your behalf, and to offer it with some feeble portion of that great apostle's zeal and earnestness; especially on beholding the wished-for term of the career, in which he has so long, though he trusts not altogether so unprofitably, detained you. Heaven is his witness, that the only object he had in view in offering this explanation of the prayers and ceremonies that accompany the august sacrifice of our altars, was the glory of God and the sanctification of your souls. He hails with joy the termination of a series of Instructions, that has afforded frequent opportunities of inculcating useful truths, and opened an abundant source of salutary meditation. My dearly beloved brethren, the attention, the assiduity, I might say the holy avidity, with which you have listened to your pastor, is a proof that he has not spoken in vain, and that you have profited by those sentiments of fervour and holy recollection with which he has been soli-

citous to inspire you. What now remains, in order to conclude this work in a manner corresponding to its importance? St Paul traces out the proper method for me to pursue; ‘not to cease praying for you, that you may be filled with all knowledge;’—that knowledge which no books or instructions, not even the most pious and solid, are able to impart, but which is derived from prayer and constant meditation on the will of heaven. May he fill you with that wisdom, which, different from the wisdom of this world, embraces both the present and the future; that wisdom, which enlightens the minds of the most simple ‘with spiritual understanding;’ that wisdom which causeth us ‘to walk worthy of God;’ that wisdom which overlooks every pleasure and advantage, and rises superior to all human respects, in order to attend to that only which is ‘in all things pleasing to God;’ that wisdom, in fine, which ‘makes us fruitful in every good work, and strengthened with all might according to the power of his glory.’ Such is the prayer which, in the words of the apostle, we offer in your behalf;—a prayer that comprises all we can hope or expect from the Instructions here offered. But what means are we to employ, to secure and lay up in our hearts the blessed fruits derived from the sacrifice of our altars? or, rather, what is that Christian to do, who has approached this divine oblation in the best possible dispositions, and is anxious to lose none of the advantages it holds out? I purpose considering these important points in this last instruction.

I figure to myself the Christian, at the moment the priest quits the altar and leaves him alone in the presence of his God. I suppose him a man of solid faith and enlightened piety, very different, of course, from those servile adorers who assist at the altar merely through custom, or a compliance with the formal precepts of the church. He will not hurry from the sanctuary as from a place of irksomeness and constraint; no, he will remain and meditate for some moments on the adorable mysteries that have just been operated. But what utility will he derive from this meditation? Three considerations will naturally occur to his mind, which will tend in no small degree to secure him the fruit of the sacred oblation at which he has assisted.

In all the prayers that compose the Liturgy, in all the ceremonies that accompany these prayers, and in all the graces that naturally flow from this oblation, he has seen the charity of Jesus Christ reduced into practice, and established as the rule of that enjoined him by the gospel. 1st, Charity towards God, the characteristics of which Jesus Christ has taught us: 2dly, Charity towards our neighbour, of which Jesus Christ has shown us the effects: 3dly, Charity towards ourselves, of which Jesus Christ has himself prescribed the rules. Were he feelingly impressed with the force of these important lessons; did he but study with attention the personal application he ought to make thereof, how efficacious would he find this adorable sacrifice in imparting every grace and virtue!

In the first place, charity towards God—a duty of which Jesus Christ has set him the example, by fulfilling all its obligations upon this our altar. He has there seen him rendering to his eternal Father the strongest proofs of that predominant, that unqualified love, which forms the essential characteristic of charity; he has there seen him rendering to his God a sacrifice of the most profound homage and adoration; he has there seen him entirely engaged with the expiation of sin, to satisfy the justice of the Eternal; with the reparation of sin, to appease his anger; with the destruction of sin, to honour his infinite sanctity. From his divine example, he has also learnt the obligations imposed on him in quality of his Christian vocation, by which he is enjoined to live only for God, to walk only in his presence, and to seek in all things to do his holy will. By them he has been taught, that the life of a Christian should be a continual sacrifice of his own will to the will of God; that the sacrifice which is commenced at the altar, should be prolonged through every circumstance of life, and influence all our actions; that it can only be fully consummated when the victim is entirely destroyed—that is, on the day of our release from the bondage of the flesh. Now what are the consequences the Christian should draw from hence for the conduct of life? He will not quit the sanctuary, till he has made an act of sincere and humble submission to all the crosses and tribulations which Providence is pleased to appoint; till he has formed

a serious resolution of studying the will of God, and following it in all his actions. Thus will he stand prepared to meet all events with Christian resignation, all the assaults of his spiritual foes with courage and caution; and it is from this sacrifice he will derive the principles necessary to regulate, and the graces to sanctify the application to be made of these mysteries of mercy.

How easy is it in the intercourse of life to distinguish that Christian who, in his assiduous attendance at the altar, has imbibed the rules for his conduct towards God! A profound humility, a sincere piety, a salutary fear of the divine justice, a horror of sin, a love of justice, a detachment from every thing earthly, an ardent desire after the good things of eternity:—such are the virtues, whose germ is found in the sacrifice of the Mass, and whose developement is the effect of a devout participation of these adorable mysteries.

A profound humility—of which Jesus Christ has set us an example by the silence he keeps, and the state of separation in which he remains upon our altars. The Christian may imitate this divine model by a continual distrust in himself; by his zeal to refer all his good actions to the greater honour and glory of his God; by his solicitude to remain unknown, in as far as it is neither inconsistent with the glory of God, nor detrimental to the spiritual interests of his neighbour; by his flying the honours and distinctions of the world; and even by the offering he makes to hea-

ven of the humiliations, the contempt, the injuries he is doomed to experience either from the pride or the malice of his fellow-men.

A sincere piety—of which Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the obligations, by rendering to his eternal Father the homage most worthy his supreme Majesty. It is from him the devout Christian has learnt to worship in spirit and in truth. Thus the interior of his house will become a temple, and his own heart a sanctuary, in which the Almighty will be assiduously honoured, faithfully served and praised with uninterrupted ardour.

A salutary fear of the divine justice—It was to satisfy this justice that the Lamb of God was once immolated in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, and shall be in an unbloody manner upon our altars, even to the consummation of ages. The devout and attentive Christian is penetrated with holy awe when he approaches the altar of his God: nor is the feeling confined here; its salutary influence extends to all his actions, and leads him to fear a Father whom he loves and respects—a father no less severe and inflexible, than he is tender and indulgent. A horror of sin must necessarily follow dispositions like these. It is upon our altars that Jesus Christ daily renews the atonement for sin; and the faithful Christian may estimate its enormity from the immensity of the reparation. He can never forget, that an offence which required the death of a God, and whose stains can only be effaced by the daily oblation of a God, must be an

evil of the most incalculable magnitude; that to live on with fatal security in the midst of sin, is of all situations the most awful and alarming.

Hence, it is in a love of justice, that the Christian must seek the remedy for sin. He beholds, in the sacrifice of the Mass, the accomplishment of what the prophet foresaw in spirit, when he said; 'Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity: therefore the Lord hath anointed thee with the oil of justice.' He may be said to co-operate with Jesus Christ in his priesthood, as often as he doth justice, and stands up boldly in its defence; as often as he suffers for justice's sake, by vindicating its cause against those who seek to pervert its principles, and overturn its laws.

Animated with these generous sentiments, what contempt must the true Christian feel for the things of earth! In the sacrament of the altar, he beholds Jesus Christ in a state of perfect separation, existing alone, and yet all sufficient for himself; cheered by so illustrious an example, he rises superior to those earth-born desires that torment the heart; and submits with cheerfulness to the lot which Providence has assigned him. Narrow circumstances, the loss of friends, multiplied necessities, and habitual infirmities—all appear marked out in the order of that eternal Wisdom, which, as it has created us only for heaven, is desirous to prepare us for that blessed state, by habits of self-denial and detachment from the things of earth.

We also learn from Jesus Christ immolated on

our altars, that, through the high privileges conferred by charity, we may, at the same time, be both on earth and in heaven; that we may, at the same moment, be united to him in a state of glory, and a state of immolation, and bear the two-fold character of the natural and the spiritual man. The conversation of the true Christian is with men; but his heart and his desires are in heaven. He partakes of all the weaknesses of humanity; yet still enjoys a foretaste of the delights of eternity. In a word, though the charity he has imbibed in the sacrament of the altar, unites him to his God; yet still it leaves him among his brethren; because, after the example of his divine Master, he has to fulfil certain duties of charity towards his neighbour; and it is in the constant exercise of these duties, that the grace of this adorable sacrament is brought into action. Thus united to Jesus Christ, the true Christian becomes a kind of second mediator to intercede for his brethren, a saviour to succour them in their necessities, and a model to instruct them by his example. Jesus Christ is pleased to make those, who are thus indissolubly united to him in his divine sacrament, the living and reflected images of himself. It is he who forms those children of prayer, who, alive to whatever regards the glory of God and the salvation of their neighbour, bewail the abominations that surround them, solicit the conversion of those who are wandering from the true fold, stay the arm of vengeance that is raised to exterminate the sinner,



**and cease not to entreat the Almighty, through Jesus Christ, to hasten the coming of his kingdom.**

It is he who forms those children of charity, to whom no necessity of their brethren is an object of indifference, who fondly sympathize in the miseries of all, and who, after the example of their divine Master, entirely lose sight of themselves amidst the general interests of their brethren. It is he who forms those children of mercy, who are no less feelingly alive to the miseries of their brethren, than if they were their own; those men of edifying character, who, in spite of their endeavours to conceal their good works, shed around the odour of their virtues, force the most inveterate enemies of religion to respect her maxims, and make more conquests to the gospel than the most eloquent preachers, and the most enlightened doctors.

Yes, by this holy habit of uniting himself with Jesus Christ, the Christian becomes another anointed of the Lord; and, if this effect is rare among the faithful, let us candidly confess, that it is equally rare to find the man who assists at these august mysteries with the dispositions necessary to render them efficacious. But are we, therefore, to suppose that the spirit of the primitive church is entirely extinguished? If it sheds but a feeble light in these our days, the reason is, that we obscure it by our habitual listlessness and indevotion, and by the fatal exhalations that arise from the passions. Were Christians but solicitous to comply with the obligations of this sacred action, and ap-

proach the altar in dispositions of recollection and fervour, soon should we see this spirit revive, and produce all the blessed effects of the best days of Christianity. Can we wonder at the little harmony that exists between the various relations that bind men together, when we see none in the dispositions they bring to the foot of the holy altar? Some approach the sanctuary with souls so dull and insensible, that nothing can rouse them into activity; some with minds so distracted, that nothing can restrain their thoughtless levity; others with hearts so rivetted to the things of this life, as to be perfectly indifferent to the concerns of eternity; and yet there is a third effect of the charity of Jesus Christ communicated at his altar, by which we are taught to love ourselves, provided the feeling be duly regulated, and rendered in every respect conformable to the designs of heaven in our regard.

At the altar, Jesus Christ sacrifices his own glory to that of his eternal Father, and thereby insures his church and all its members an eternal weight of glory. To Him also he subjected his own will; in order to teach us that the true love of ourselves is very far from depending upon any thing that tends to flatter our pride, soothe our inclinations, or gratify our desires; on the contrary, that the more we accustom ourselves to mortify our inclinations, by subjecting them to the dictates of his holy will and law, the surer we are to obtain that true peace of the soul—the testimony of a good

conscience. This is the meaning of those emphatic expressions of the Scripture; ‘Whoever will save his life shall lose it: and he who shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.’ Dispositions like these are the most striking effect of the holy sacrifice of our altars, and consequently claim your most serious attention.

The Christian who is become a victim with Jesus Christ, can never lose sight of that state of immolation and sacrifice which this mystery prescribes. His whole life is a continual renunciation of his own will. He renounces whatever he is possessed of, by the contempt in which he holds it, and the holy use to which he applies it: he renounces the goods which he possesses not, by repressing all the inordinate desires of the heart, and by submitting, with cheerful resignation, to all the privations which the Almighty is pleased to impose. He renounces the splendour and dignities of his station, by the simplicity of his heart, and by his moderation in the use of them; he renounces those honours and distinctions to which, though not actually in his possession, he has a just claim by the consolation he feels at beholding himself secure from the snares and dangers that wait on greatness. He renounces his reputation, by his indifference to the calumnies and malignity of men; his friends, by his patience in bearing either their infidelities or their loss; his health, by resignation under his maladies, and life itself, by the voluntary surrender he makes thereof to the honour and glory of God. So far does he carry his gene-

rous heroism, as even to renounce the consolations that are attached to virtue itself, whenever it pleases God to put his fidelity to the test, by filling his soul with dryness and disgust. And where is he to find this principle of detachment and self-denial? where but at the foot of the holy altar. It is there that, separate from all, deprived of all, and abandoned by all, he meditates on a God who is his model and his master, and studies to live for him alone.

Ah, let us candidly acknowledge, that till this day we have been strangers to the precious effects of the august sacrament of our altars, from having neglected to enter feelingly into these holy dispositions. Let us form a serious resolution of henceforward approaching this adorable sacrifice with hearts alive to the numerous graces that are there offered us, docile to the instructions there given us, and above all vigilant to correct the abuses into which our indifference and ingratitude have but too often betrayed us.

Do thou, O Lord Jesus, do thou vouchsafe to lend a gracious ear to the vows with which thy minister addresses thee, in terminating this long series of Instructions. O my God, shall the tongue that has attempted, though feebly, to describe the most consoling of thy mysteries, and recount the most ineffable of thy mercies, have spoken in vain? Shall this work, undertaken solely for thy greater glory, and the edification of my brethren, leave no lasting impressions on their minds—no salutary feel-

ings on their hearts? Oh may this feeble effort of my ministry produce, at least, one happy effect, by veiling from thy sight the infinite multitude of my own distractions and negligencies! Penetrated with these saving truths, at once so full of terror and consolation, I shall henceforward learn to offer the adorable sacrifice with that lively faith, profound humility and fervent charity, which so august a sacrament requires. Fill my heart with a holy zeal, a tender and enlightened piety, that I may teach the flock entrusted to my care, fully to estimate the excellence of the victim, and the greatness of the oblation! Inspire both thy priest and people with feelings of religious awe: purify the hearts of both with the fire of thy charity, and soften them into compunction! May this sacred oblation unite all the members to that divine head who was immolated for all! May the blood which flows upon our altars, become the seal of their perfect reconciliation in time, and the pledge of their eternal felicity. Amen.

FINIS.

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Page 73, line 16, for *of these* read *thereof*.









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